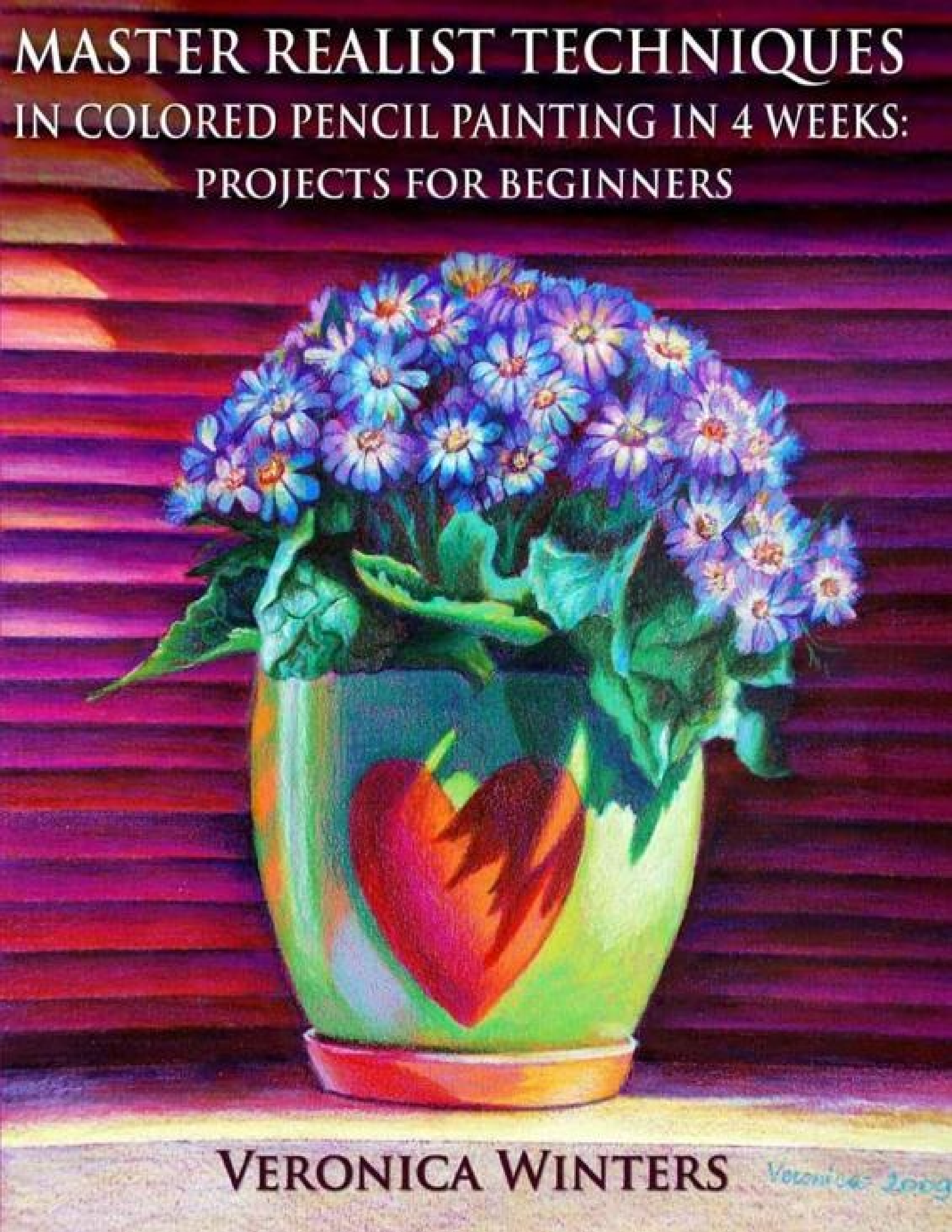
MASTER REALIST TECHNIQUES IN COLORED PENCIL PAINTING IN 4 WEEKS: PROJECTS FOR BEGINNERS



VERONICA WINTERS

Master Realist Techniques in Colored Pencil Painting in 4 Weeks: Projects for Beginners

by Veronica Winters

www.VeronicasArt.com

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About The Author

Veronica Winters received her B.F.A. in studio art from the Oklahoma State University and her M.F.A. in painting from the Pennsylvania State University. She paints full-time in her studio and teaches art classes both privately and in schools.

Veronica has received numerous commissions for works now in private collections in the U.S.A. and Europe. Her work has earned multiple awards and has been published in Magazine Leisure Painter, Magazine American Art Collector, and other magazines. Veronica's retrospective catalog of drawings "Life in Colored Pencil" is available for purchase online at Amazon.com.

To contact the artist and see more artwork available visit her website at www.VeronicasArt.com.

About This Book

This book is designed for absolute BEGINNERS who have the patience to work with colored pencils, and can dedicate enough time to develop their artistic sensibilities. Students from age twelve to adulthood will benefit from its contents, strengthening their skills and discovering their creative possibilities. This book is packed with valuable information on tools and techniques for drawing still life, landscape, cityscape, texture, glass and flowers. In addition to informative illustrations and descriptions, each chapter features several step-by-step demonstrations.

For experienced artists, the book offers explorations of a variety of more sophisticated subjects, complete with additional step-by-step demonstrations.

Dedication

To all my teachers who believed in my abilities; to all my students who asked me to share my knowledge with them; to my husband Max Fomitchev who always supported my artistic adventures and never allowed me to give up; and to my son Vladislav who motivated me to rediscover my creative self.

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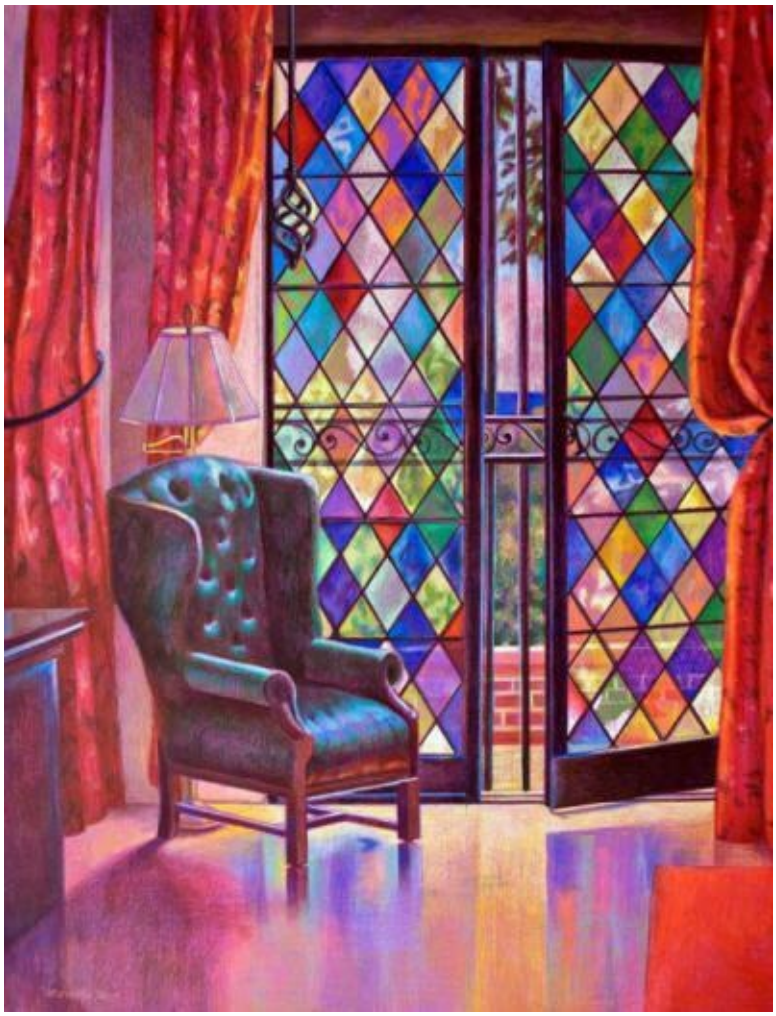
Chapter One



Beta House French Doors · 19 x 25" (48 x 63 cm) · 2009

Artist’s Materials

“Great painting is the product of a mind that is seeing, tasting, and exploring the entire fabric of life.” -- W. Somerset Maugham

I just LOVE colored pencils! The more colors I own the better I feel. But to tell you the truth, all you really need to start out an adventure in artistic exploration is a basic set of 24 pencils, a paper pad, two erasers (white and kneaded) and a pencil sharpener. That’s it! Good quality materials help the students to produce better art as opposed to the use of low-quality supplies. However, it’s important to remember that it’s not just the materials that create a winning painting, but the artist who orchestrates beauty and harmony on paper.

Colored pencils are versatile: they can be mixed with other media like watercolor, graphite, pastel, markers and even acrylic paint. Pencils allow for maximum control in realist rendering and deliver rich colorful surfaces. They are also the easiest medium to master drawing at home. For all of these reasons, I believe colored pencils offer the perfect medium for the beginning artist.

So, let’s begin!

List of Terms Used in This Chapter

Burnishing – a technique of layering color with heavy pressure. Tools like colorless blender, white pencil, turpenoid or mineral spirits are used to get rid of any textural areas appearing in the drawing. In other words, burnishing allows the artist to polish the surface to its maximum smoothness, producing deeper darks and rich mid-tones.

Colorfast or Lightfast paper or pencils – color resistant materials that resist to fading from light, heat, acids or other environmental agents. In other words, these are papers and pencils that don’t “age” with time.

Deckle Edge – the feathery paper edge in handmade or mould made paper. It is beautiful and creative to tear sheets into smaller pieces of paper to achieve this lovely deckle edge in lithographic prints and drawings. The deckle edge is not covered with a mat when framed.

GSM or Grams per square meter – the gram weight per square meter of paper that does not vary with sheet size. It is helpful for the artist to determine paper's weight. *Strathmore Bristol vellum* paper, for example, is 100 lb (260g/m2) while *Strathmore Drawing medium* paper is 80 lb (130g/m2)–meaning the first is heavier (thicker) than the second.

Hue **–** another word for "color" (ex. red, green).

Paper's tooth – the surface feel of paper. The more tooth a paper has, the rougher it feels to the touch. There are ultra-smooth, smooth, medium, rough and heavily rough surfaces available:

- *Hot pressed* paper has a smooth surface.
- *Vellum* paper has a very finely textured, smooth surface. (Vellum also means heavy weight, translucent drawing paper.)
- *Cold pressed* paper has a slightly textured surface.
- *Rough* paper has a heavily textured surface.

Plane- a flat or level surface. I use this term to describe the paper's surface.

Watermark – is the brand name embossed in the corner of paper and visible when a sheet is held to the light (Examples; Arches cold press, Reeves BFK, etc.).

Pencils

I've been using *Prismacolor*® colored pencils for many years. They have unsurpassed richness of color, pigment saturation and softness, and they are sold in a neat and durable storage box. Other brands I've tried have harder leads, and deliver less vivid color. *Prismacolor* pencils are sold at any local craft store, and online. If I run out of a particular color, I can purchase it separately or buy individual pencils that I don't have in my original set.

Key Features of *Prismacolor Premier Colored Pencils*:

- High quality pigments produce a rich color saturation
- Soft, thick cores create a smooth color laydown for superior blending and shading
- Thick leads resist breakage
- Sold individually or in sets of 12, 24, 36, 48, 72, 120 & 132.

Prismacolor Premier Lightfast Colored Pencils differ from the pencils mentioned above. They are also artists' quality pencils with high quality pigments and soft, thick cores that provide excellent resistance to the fading effects of prolonged exposure to light. Lightfast pencils cost a bit more and are available in 48 colors sold individually or in a set of 12, 24& 48.

Prismacolor Premier Colored Pencil Blenders feature non-pigmented, wax-based lead ideal for softening hard edges and blending colors. They are sold individually. I use these a lot to blend light color combinations in my drawings.

Prismacolor Art Stix are a high quality "sticks" that have all the basic properties of colored pencils, but are shaped into pastel form. This allows for a bold, rich lay down of color to cover large areas of drawing—speeding up the creative process and conserving regular pencils for detail work. *Prismacolor Art*

Stix are available in 48 colors, and are sold both individually and in sets.

Graphite Pencils

General's Semi-Hex graphite pencil is just one of many pencils available today. This one is made with incense cedar wood and is available in 5 degrees: (1(B) extra soft; 2(HB) soft; 2 ½(F) medium; 3(H) hard; 4 (2H) extra hard). Numbers 2 and 3 should be used for outline drawing, and number 1 is great for shading in black-and-white drawing. Other brands of 2HB pencils can be used.

Erasers

Prismacolor Kneaded Rubber Erasers are soft gray erasers that remove pencils gently and cleanly. These can be kneaded into a thin point, or any shape necessary, to remove tiny specs or soften highlights. They are available in three sizes and are sold individually or in boxes of 12.

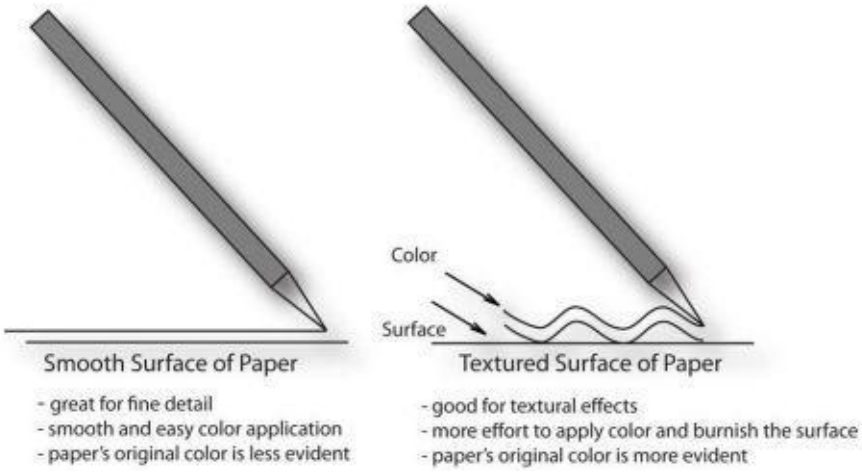
Prismacolor Magic Rub Erasers are latex free, vinyl erasers that erase drawings cleanly and are sold individually or in boxes of 12. Other soft erasers can be substituted if necessary.

Paper

There are so many choices of papers available today! I believe you should try them all and see what works best for you. Personally, I recommend plain white, off-white or cream *Stonehenge* paper, *Canson* paper and *Strathmore Bristol* smooth paper. They all offer a wonderful, smooth finish, ideal for achieving maximum detail and ease of color application.

Color Papers

Color papers made by *Strathmore and Stonehenge* with a smooth finish work really well. Because the artist doesn't have to fight with the paper's tooth, colors layer easily. The pencil glides over the surface smoothly, and less effort is required from the artist to burnish the surface. Pick color paper of medium value range tone, like *Steel Gray* or *Felt Gray*. Try other darker and lighter paper colors to determine which one works the best for your drawing style. *Black, dark blue* or *ivy* paper colors belong to "dark value range" papers, while *Moonstone, Sky Blue* and *Pearl* are in the family of "light value range" papers. The same hues of colored pencils applied over these variously toned colored papers appear very different to the eye. Experiment!



If you want to produce textural effects when drawing landscapes or wooden surfaces, choose papers that have some tooth in them. You can feel a paper's roughness by touching the surface with your finger. *Strathmore Drawing* pads with medium texture, *Canson drawing* papers, or even *watercolor cold press* papers would all be good choices for creating textures. However, working on rough textured papers requires more lead to compensate for increased tooth. The

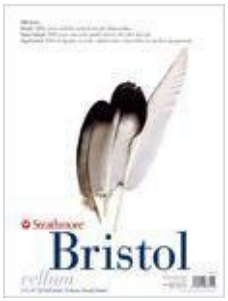
line drawing above gives a visual picture of this concept.

Beware of cheap papers, or papers suitable for sketch drawing only. They do not accept as many layers of color as more expensive papers do, and they also pick up pencil grime easily. Pencil grime will muddy the surface of the drawing, especially in the area with highlights.

Suggested brands:

Legion Drawing Papers:

• *Drawing Bristol* works exceptionally well with pencils and is available in 22x30-inch sheets.



• *Stonehenge Paper* is a most popular traditional acid-free, 100% cotton quality drawing paper. It has a smooth vellum surface with a deckle edge, is available in range of colors, and is sold in both pads and sheets.

• *Strathmore 300, 400, 500 Series Bristol Paper* has an excellent smooth surface (smooth and vellum finish). It is heavy, acid free, and is available in pads of various sizes. Strathmore papers have an unsurpassed, ultra-smooth finish for detailed work with pencils.

Pencil Sharpeners

Not all pencil sharpeners are the same. Cheap ones simply break the soft lead of a pencil. Spend a dollar more for a better product like *General's All Art* red pencil sharpener. It looks ordinary but will take good care of your precious pencils, sharpening them to the finest point possible. Change your pencil sharpener as soon as the blade gets dull and starts breaking pencil's lead. You can also use an electric Boston sharpener, which is nice and efficient.

Suggested brands:

- *General's Little-Red All-Art* Sharpener
- *General's Metal* Sharpener, both available individually.

Drafting Brush

Many artists enjoy having a soft, drafting brush to keep their drawings clean of any pencil particles and other residue.

Pencil Extenders

A pencil extender is a very nice tool. It comes handy when the expensive colored pencil is getting too short to hold. With the extender, you can keep working on your art with maximum control and precision.

Pencil Organization

I have over 50 pencils at my disposal, and suggest organizing your colors either in a box or in several cans. This makes it a lot faster and easier to make color choices when drawing. For instance, I keep all my cool and warm greens together in one can, cool and warm blues in the other, yellows and oranges in a separate box, and so on.

Mylar Film

If you’re drawing from photos, *Mylar film* or tracing paper is very useful. You can place *Mylar film* over the photo and trace the lines with a 2 HB graphite pencil, then use the finished outline for the drawing.

Or better yet, use *Sarah wax free transfer paper* or *Sally’s wax free graphite transfer paper.* These work like carbon paper to transfer an outlined drawing to another surface. And they leave no grease, are easy to erase and deliver a clean, light line.

Spray Fixative

I use two kids of fixatives to preserve my drawings. Both are sold at any retail store and online. *Workable fixative* allows me to fix my drawing in between layers of color, preventing it from smudging and smearing. It's often used in layering pastels and charcoal. *Final fixative* is used for the final finish. It is UVA & UVB light resistant, non-yellowing and fast drying. Spray fixative must be used in a room with good ventilation, or outdoors. Hold the can in the upright position, not too close to your drawing, and give it a light, even spray coat across the entire surface. Always let it dry before applying the second coat.

Suggested brands:

Prismacolor Workable Fixative is designed to use on artwork in-progress and is available in a matte finish.

Prismacolor Tufflim Final Fixative is high quality, designed for use on completed drawings, and available in matte and gloss finish.

Krylon Kamar Varnish is an affordable alternative to more expensive brands of final fixative, with the same basic properties.

Windsor & Newton Fixative is one more choice, from the English company.

Blending Tools

Odorless mineral spirits or turpenoid, *Prismacolor* Colorless blender pencils, and white pencils are all very useful tools for burnishing (blending) the drawing's surface. I use them all to achieve about the same result in blending the surface. Using a small brush, you can use turpenoid to melt the colored dark areas in your drawings. (The brush can not be used with anything else after that).

Suggested brands:

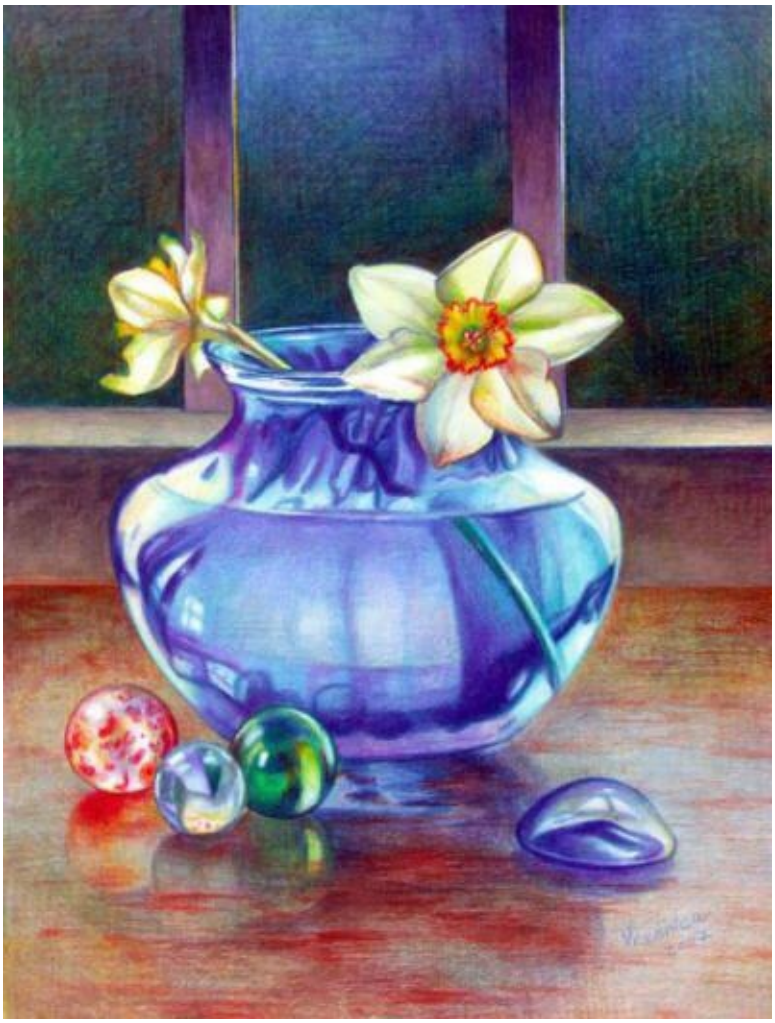
Weber Turpenoid Natural® is an effective painting medium that I use more than any other. The company claims it is also a nontoxic brush cleaner and gentle brush conditioner. It is non-flammable, does not irritate skin or eyes and does not emit harmful vapors.

Weber Odorless Turpenoid is a thin, colorless, turpentine substitute that has the same painting properties and drying time as turpentine, but is free from the strong odor. You can use it as a painting medium, and a solvent to clean clothing.

Hint in Blending: I prefer a *Prismacolor Colorless Blender* pencil to mix the *light colors* in highlight areas as opposed to the mineral spirits or turpenoid. It gives me a more controlled, mess-free application. I often draw with white pencil over the finished artwork to lighten up a particular area if it got too dark, or to smooth out an area around the highlights.

Iris · 18 x 24" (46 x 61 cm) · 2008

Chapter Two



Still Life with Blue Vase and Daffodils · 9 x 12" · 2007

Techniques

"It is better to invent reality than to copy it." -- Giuseppe Verdi

If you lack the patience to spend long hours, and even weeks on a single piece of art, then colored pencils are not your friends. If you do then WELCOME! It is such a pleasure to work with colored pencils and learn their endless possibilities. Colored pencil is the easiest medium to learn for students interested in depicting details and color. It is a very forgiving medium—allowing you to cover up mistakes, compensate for not knowing color theory, and layer additional color without fear of mixing wishy-washy grays.

Note on Chapter Organization

In each chapter of this book I offer a handy list of definitions to familiarize you with artistic terms used in the chapter, followed by informative text and imagery explaining the chapter's central concepts, and several step-by-step demonstrations for both beginners and more advanced students. Large reference photographs and outline drawings of each project can be found at the end of this book. Beginning artists can copy the outline drawings for greater accuracy in following my step-by-step demonstrations with maximum confidence.

In each project I outline basic colors to use. Other colors similar in hue and tone can be substituted. Moreover, I encourage you to use any additional colors you desire in the projects. You are also welcome to alter my step-by-step demonstrations by experimenting with different color schemes and pencil stroke applications.

However, I strongly urge you NOT to skip the explanations I've written at the beginning of each chapter; and to PLEASE follow through on all big and small exercises presented. If you do this, you will gain the maximum benefit from this book, and will be well on your way to becoming a skilled colored pencil artist.

Best of luck, and happy drawing!

List of Terms Used in This Chapter

Outlining – drawing a contour of the object with either a graphite pencil or a

lighter shade of colored pencil. I used to Xerox the outline drawing and experiment with color combinations before starting to work on my actual drawing.

Shading – layering colors uniformly in broad strokes, creating a smooth, even finish.

Overlapping –covering with a design, in which one element or pencil stroke covers part of another.

Hint : To start, always place a piece of drawing paper on a hard, but smooth surface. It is more challenging to color the darkest darks working on a softer plane. Drawing is complicated enough. Don’t make it harder by ignoring this simple rule.

Line Types

I list a few basic line types here, which are helpful to know and use, describing any subject matter in drawing. The artist's personal handwriting is unique and each person handles color pencils in his or her own special way. Some artists prefer to use directional strokes only; others draw in scribbles. I use crosshatching strokes most of the time. By applying directional lines in various sizes and various directions (the crosshatching method), I'm able to describe a form evenly and quickly.

Vertical line – a group of lines placed vertically, in close proximity to each other, drawn in a single direction. With no harsh lines and an even tone, vertical lines give a smooth appearance to the drawing.

Horizontal line –a group of lines placed horizontally in a single direction.

Crosshatching or overlapping - a technique of placing rapid, multiple, parallel lines that crisscross each other at angles to model tone. You eliminate harsh lines by canceling them out with successive strokes that are layered on top of previous ones in the opposite direction. With crosshatching, you can also create different shades using multiple colors – blending and creating textures in successive layers. I am a fan of this method because I find it efficient in covering the surface.

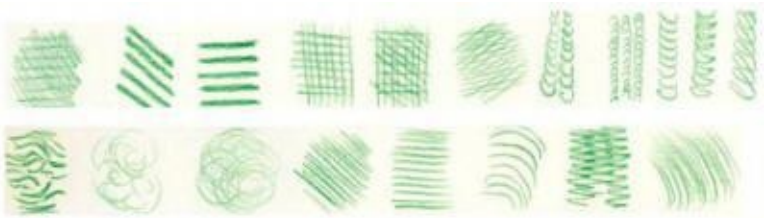
Feather strokes (or feathering) – tiny, lightly pressured circular strokes of even color with very soft “top” and “bottom.” Feathering can be used with one or multiple layers of color, drawing faintly around the highlights with maximum precision.

Distinct strokes (or “outline)” – hard-pressure strokes of even color application, with definite “top” and “bottom.” They are useful to create outlines and textures; and to bring attention to the focal point.

Scribbling – “zigzagging” strokes that go up and down and placed closely to one another.

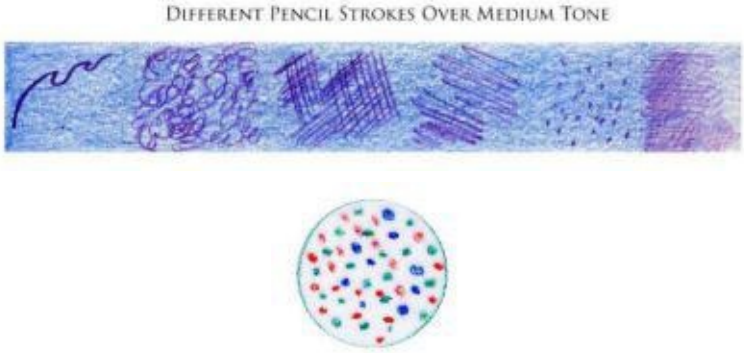
Broken scribbling – a zigzag stroke that’s shorter than normal. It works best for making textures.

In actual drawing artists use a combination of all strokes and lines described above.



In these sketches, various quick lines depict different objects set in the space.

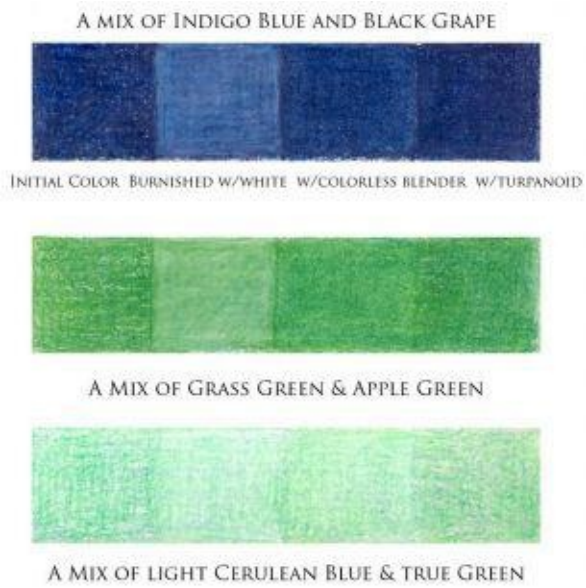
Hint: Try placing a distinct line (outline) over a previously colored surface in a few focal areas. This crisp line adds final touches to the artwork, highlights the details, and focuses the eye on the center of interest.



Stippling or *Pointillism*– is a meticulous drawing method where myriads of tiny dots are placed in close proximity to each other. Paul Signac and Georges Seurat discovered the scientific method of juxtaposing small dots of pure color on canvas, which are intended to combine and blend in viewer's mind. In Pointillism values are controlled by applying more or less pressure, varying the dots' size and spacing. I find this method to be very time consuming, hence I avoid it.

Burnishing Vs. Transparent Color Applications

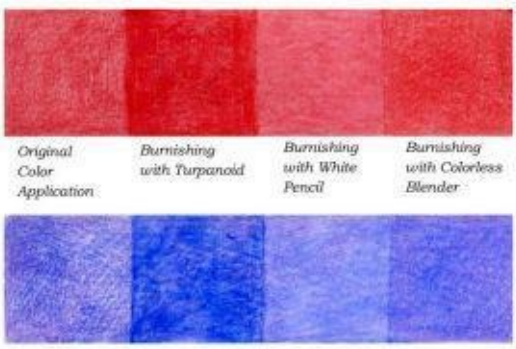
Burnishing –a technique of layering color with heavy pressure to achieve a smooth color lay on paper. Tools like colorless blenders, white pencils, turpenoid or mineral spirits are used to get rid of any textural areas (created by the paper's tooth) left in the drawing. In other words, burnishing allows the artist to polish the surface to its maximum smoothness where the paper's surface is evenly filled with color, producing deeper darks and rich mid-tones. I usually paint with turpenoid in the first two layers of drawing and apply colorless blender or white pencil in my final layers.



Here, three different color mixes show the distinctive outcomes of burnishing with white pencil, colorless blender or turpenoid/mineral spirits.

Hints for Burnishing

1. Blend colors from light to dark, keeping both pencil tips and tools clean of any residue.
2. Burnish the surface gradually by varying pressure on the pencil. If it becomes too dark, layer lighter color over it (cream or white).



3. Burnish carefully around the highlights in little scribbling circles as opposed to large cross-hatching lines.

4. In the burnished area, scrap out a few highlights with a knife, “drawing” grass blades, strands of hair, etc...

Transparent color application involves using less pressure in layering colors, allowing the paper’s original tone to show through (the opposite of burnishing). This application process is similar to watercolor painting technique, because colored pencils are also transparent when layered with slight pencil pressure.

To begin drawing, please follow these application tips:

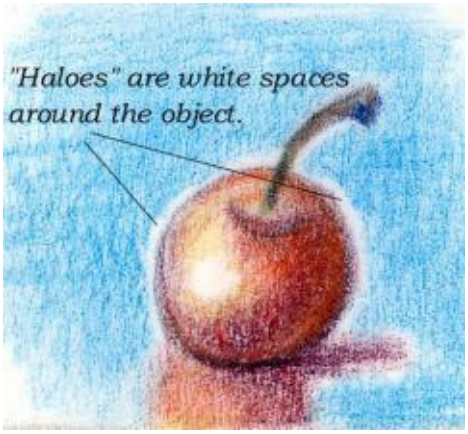
Color Applications Tips

1. Generally, work from dark to light on white paper. Use relatively dark pencil in the shadows to layer the foundation of the drawing, and then switch to lighter pencils to draw the lights.

2. Always leave highlight areas blank or free of any color (on white paper).

3. Let the pencil strokes overlap and “spill” over edges, rather then applying colors next to each other. I am not afraid of letting one color overlap the previous one unless I’m working on a highlight. In the picture to the right, “light blue” is spilled over the white edge that is later covered by “ultramarine.”

4. Overlapping also helps to get rid of harsh whiteness (white haloes) left in between objects.

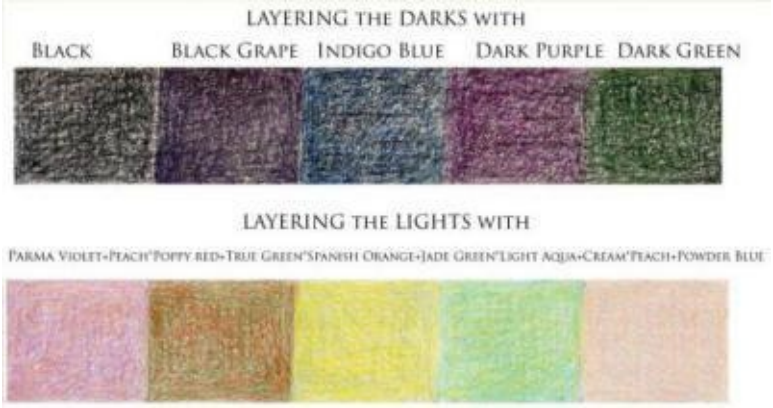


5. Avoid haloes! Every beginning student leaves a tiny line of white around objects by not coloring close enough to the edge or “spilling” over the edges.

6. Keep crucial lines outlined. When you layer a nice even tone over an initial graphite outline, your drawing looses clarity. To avoid this, you must *reestablish the line* with the colored pencil. I always reestablish the line first, and place a tone with the same color right next to crisp line. If the tone is too light, the line will look like an outline and flatten out the space. If the tone is just right, the line will blend with the overall tone. In this picture the outlined purplish line is definite and descriptive of the flower's petal. It has enough tone placed right next to it to maintain its volume.

Layering the Darks

I always focus on the darkest shadows first, and use a variety of dark pencils to establish the deepest tones. My shadows consist of at least two colors and usually do not include black. I use blues, purples and browns, with greens layering in the shadows. *Indigo blue, dark purple, violet, black grape, Tuscan red, dark brown and dark green* are my favorite choices. Occasionally, I work with *black,* but I always mix it with some other dark color when establishing the shadows or background.



Types of Edges

Edges play crucial role in drawing. Some must be definite and descriptive, others soft and less color intense.

- Blurred edges exist where colors are similar in value.
- Hard edges occur through strong contrast of light and dark.
- Linear edges are descriptive, defining form.

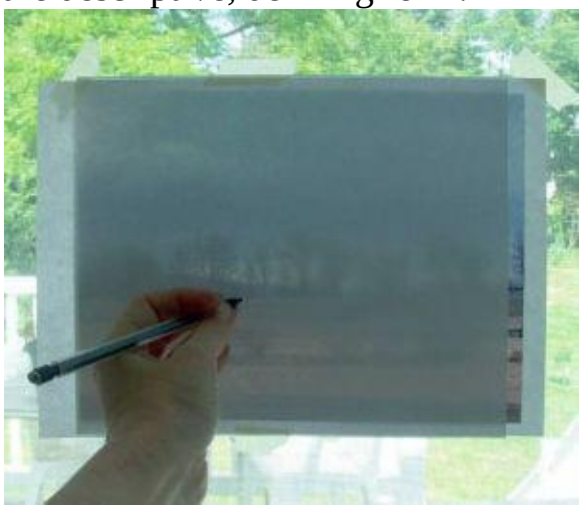


Image Transferral

There are several ways to transfer your final outline onto clean drawing paper. I usually complete a freehand drawing on my good paper, and have no need to transfer anything–unless I'm working on a vase or geometrically complex composition. If I do transfer the image, either from my picture or my sketch, I rely on the window light. You can also use either a light box or transfer paper.

Here are some transfer methods:

• Mylar

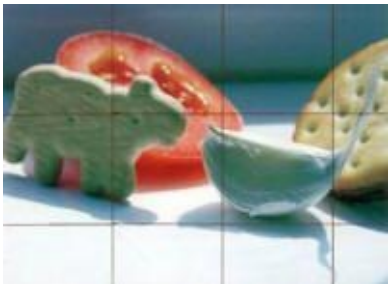
Mylar is a transparent type of paper often used instead of transfer paper. It leaves no residue while drawing and is a popular choice among artists.

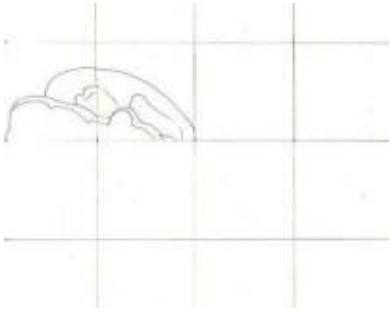
• Slide or opaque projector transferral

Many artists use a slide or a photo, and then project its image onto drawing paper and trace the outline with a graphite pencil. It is the quickest method to change the scale of drawing from a tiny picture to a giant piece. However, beginners must be aware of possible distortions in the picture. If the projector is situated at an angle, or the picture is too small, or the print of poor quality, the image will be blurred and distorted. In my opinion, the projector can help you determine size relationships quickly, but you still need to understand and redraw both the geometry and perspective to achieve the accurate results.

• Light box or window transferral

This is a great method for transferring your image onto drawing paper during the day, if your paper is not too large or heavy. (Heavy papers don't allow enough light to pass through to see the lines). This is my favorite transferral method, despite the fact that I can't enlarge the drawing.





• Squares method

Here is a proven technique that the old masters employed in large-scale mural painting.

First, divide the picture into equal squares with a graphite pencil and a ruler. Then, on the larger piece of paper, draw a grid. Finally, hand transfer parts of the drawing onto your clean paper, relying on the previously divided image. Each small square contains a part of the picture to be copied into the corresponding larger square.

This method is time-consuming, but effective and accurate.

Coloring Large Areas

I try to be as efficient as possible when working on time-consuming colored pencil drawings, and colored paper is one solution to my constant time constraints. Because it offers some tone, as opposed to stark white, colored paper can dramatically reduce your time and effort in terms of coloring large areas.

If you do choose to work on white paper, as I sometime do, you can speed up the drawing process by layering your initial background with *Prismacolor Art Stix* (one or two of them are usually included in a box set as a bonus). With the broad side, you can apply large bands of color and cover the entire background quickly. I crosshatch with *Art Stix* in my first layer or two and layer color pencils over it. If you try this, pay close attention to the edges, and eliminate white “halos” with sharpened pencils, because *Art Stix* do not allow for precise application.

Chapter Three

Birthday Cake · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2007

Value, Light, Shadow and Proportion

"Every good painter paints what he is." -- Jackson Pollock

Value, light, shadow and proportion are all vital principles in representational art. Learning to understand and paint values is critical if you want to make realist artwork. Professional artists see not only hues but also values of color, and recognize the significance of tonal contrast in the drawing.

To judge the value of a color requires looking at pictures in grayscale format. Imagine you're wearing special glasses that eliminate color, and see images as if you were viewing black-and-white photography. A visually attractive picture has a great range of values or gradations from deepest black to lightest light (check out Ansel Adams' photography, for example). Compare a student's artwork with the professional's. Often, the student employs midrange values of color, creating a dull picture lacking contrast, while the artist creates visual harmony on paper with a wide range of lights and darks. It is a challenge for beginning artists to "translate" values into appropriate color mixtures to create enough contrast in the picture.

In addition to seeing and rendering values effectively, successful artists also depict their subjects with accurate proportions and scale. Awkwardly positioned and intuitively drawn objects create visual imbalance. In this chapter you'll learn how to see values, and how to draw well-proportioned objects.

List of Terms Used in This Chapter

Composition – the balanced arrangement of elements in a work of art.

Fleck – a small particle of color.

Focal Point or Center of Interest – the center of attention at which all compositional elements or aspects meet with maximum detail.

Local Color – the natural color of an object as it appears in normal light. In drawing, local colors are applied over complementary colors to create a vibrant surface.

Monochromatic Image – consists of one color in a range of value gradations. (Example: Deepest blue, blue, light blue…)

Proportion – comparative relationships between objects (i.e. size, volume, quantity, etc.), which, when rendered correctly, create a sense of harmony, symmetry and balance.

Tonal Foundation – the basic value of a color applied across relatively wide area in the picture. (The background color can be middle gray with other value variations added later).

Value – the degree of lightness or darkness of a color, especially in relation to another contrasting color. It is the relation of light and shade in painting that creates tonal gradations (chiaroscuro). Value is different from color.

Color or Chroma or Hue– any hue distinguished from white and black— red, green, violet, etc…

Value scale –a gradation of a color's tone, from its lightest light (highlight) to its darkest dark, in five or more consecutive steps.

Seeing Values

An abundance of color in a setup, or picture, makes it difficult to focus on values. As an exercise, beginners need to eliminate color. One way to achieve this is to print a grayscale version of the original image or Xerox it and place it next to the color picture. In the black-and-white version, you will see value gradations ranging from very light to deep dark. Another way of eliminating color is to place a piece of colored acetate over the original image. The acetate sheet will neutralizes color and make the photo or setup monochromatic.

Original colorful image its grayscale version its monochromatic version

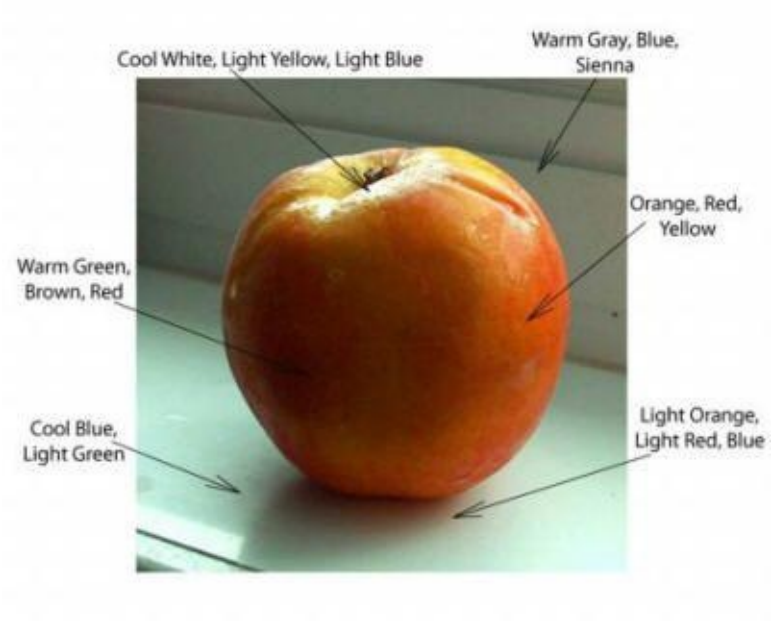
After eliminating color, familiarize yourself with tone and value, by drawing gradations from dark to light in *black* pencil.

Artists rely on the value scale of at least five tones (and up to ten) to create an artwork. Zero is the lightest value (white paper tone) and five is the darkest value (burnished surface). First, crosshatch a value scale of just five tones. Start with deepest black and gradually work the way to light. Later, try drawing another grayscale strip with ten tones. Watch for slight gradations between values. Use the finest point and the lightest pencil pressure to create the lights.

The next step is to choose a still life and make a black-and-white sketch of the original setup.

Seeing Colors

In addition to seeing values, you must learn to see a wide range of colors. Seeing color is another element in realistic drawing (see Chapter Four for more detail). Most representational paintings are about painting the light with color. Artists see how the light turns the form, beautifully passing through and over objects and casting deep shadows.



Look at the chosen subject attentively. In this photograph, for example, what color does the fruit have in the highlight? Besides obvious *white*, this peach has a mix of *light blue* and *light yellow*. What's in the cast shadow under the peach? It is not plain gray. Do you see lighter versions of peach colors reflected off it, like *light orange* and *light red*? Analyze the colors in the fruit's shadowy area. What hues do you see besides red? If you find "not so obvious" colors and put them in your drawings, you will create richly colored surfaces.

Once you've finished your grayscale sketch and the color analysis of a setup, it's time to get busy drawing an outline and coloring it in pencils!

Establishing Successful Background

Students often have trouble deciding where to start coloring. A good rule of thumb is to *draw the darks first and finish up with the highlights,* just like in the “value scale” exercise you’ve just completed. Begin by determining what the darkest area is and apply enough pressure in that area to make deep darks with a color combination of two or three dark pencils.

It is also a good habit to begin coloring from background to foreground. Any focal point is described by the value of its background. If a peony is light pink, the background needs to be at least two tones darker (or lighter) to make it stand out more. General shading of the background helps to eliminate lots of white space around the center of interest. It makes the focal point stand out more, and in turn, helps to establish the correct value of its color.

It’s hard to keep the focal point clean of any residue when coloring the background. The highlights get dirty and other colors are easily smudged. I suggest you keep a clean piece of paper between your drawing and the palm of your hand. This should help you keep the focal point clean.

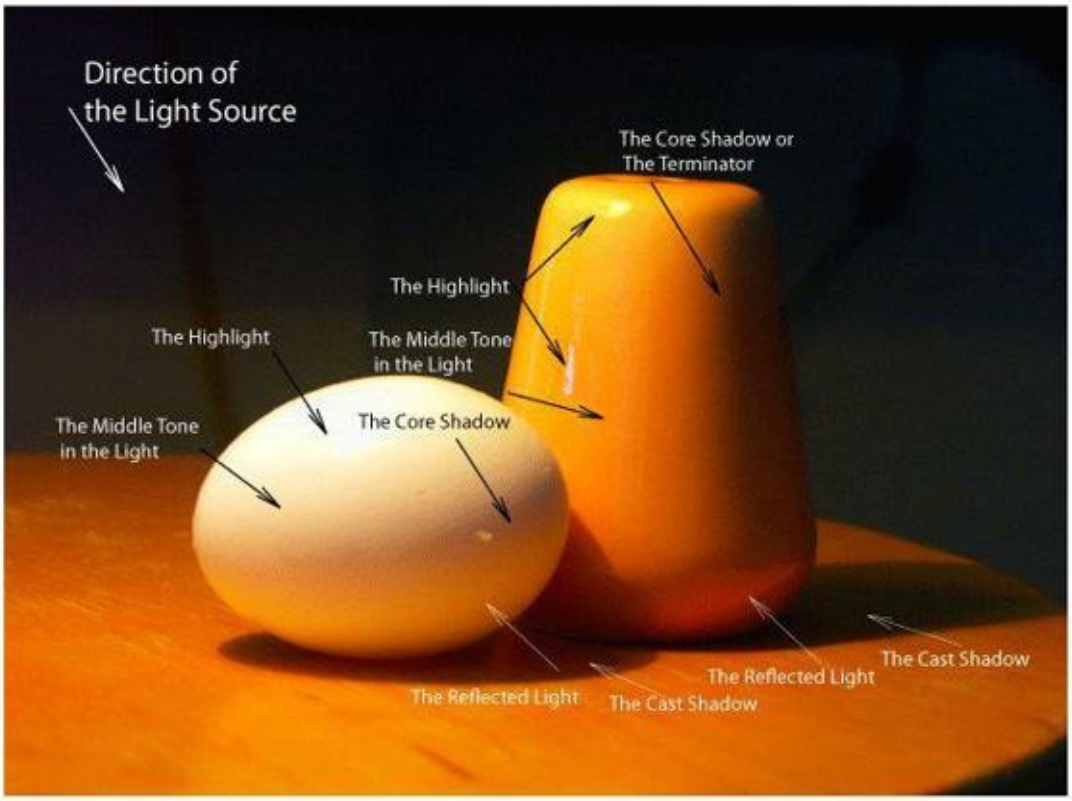
When applying colors, I crosshatch in many layers. The darker the area is the more color layers I have to apply. I am not going to give you any specific colors to use. You can employ a variety of color combinations and they will all work well. Rather, I will advise you on picking certain color combinations in the following demonstrations to speed up the learning process. You can always add more hues to it or even replace certain colors. My palette shows my sensitivity to color. You can discover yours!

Seeing Shadows

There are two types of shadows we see: a cast shadow and a form (or core) shadow, sometimes called the terminator. Beginning artists must learn to distinguish between them when drawing.

A cast shadow is a darker, sharper-edged type of a shadow created by an object blocking a light source. For example, we see long shadows on the ground cast by trees blocking the evening light in an alley. Or we notice the shadow cast by fruit and plates onto a table top. It's a shadow *under* and around the object. It is relatively dark, but not solid, with a crisp edge close to the object and soft edge away from it.

A core (form) shadow is the shadow *on* an object, appearing on the side opposite a light source. It repeats the object's shape and is situated close to the edge in shade. It has a blended, soft edge, and its placement is crucial in painting a three-dimensional subject. Without its placement objects appear flat. It is easy to see a core shadow under strong directional light but it becomes more illusive in overcast day light. I often squint at both my drawing and setup to see core shadows more clearly.

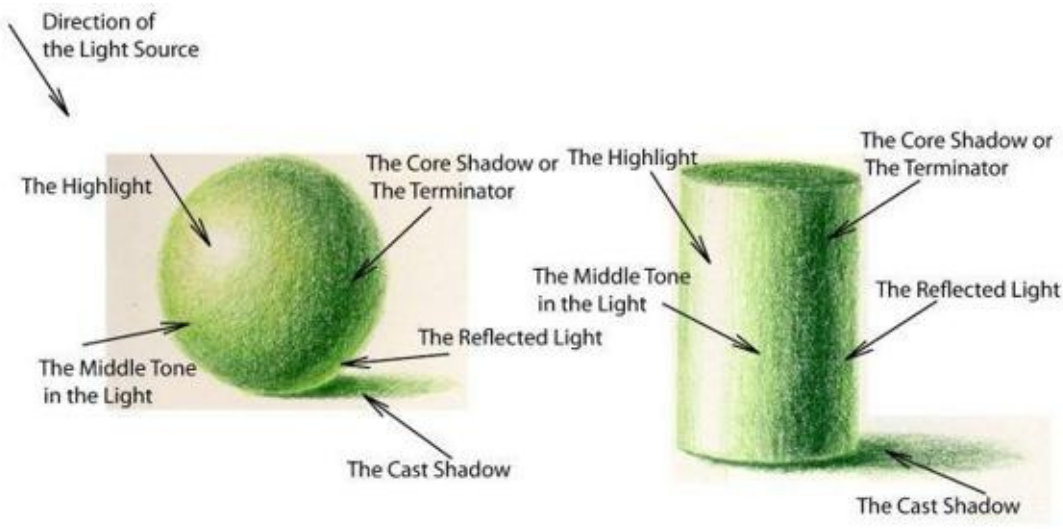


In addition to shadows, you must learn to draw reflected light, mid-tones and highlights to create the illusion of volume.

A reflected light is situated right on an object's edge in the shadow area. It is a bit lighter than a core shadow but darker than mid-tones. A reflected light bounces off the light from other objects around it. For example, if red apple is placed on a blue plate, the apple will have a touch of blue color in its reflected light. If I put this apple onto a yellow napkin, it will have a yellowish reflected light. In the picture above, the egg has a reddish reflected light that bounces off the table and the salt shaker.

A *highlight* becomes the lightest light in a picture. I often leave paper's original white color for the highlight and draw with light pencils around it.

Middle-tones – create a gradation between the highlight and the form shadow. Mid-tones "connect" the highlight with shade in successive gradations. The previously completed "value scale" exercise will help you draw simple objects in value gradations.

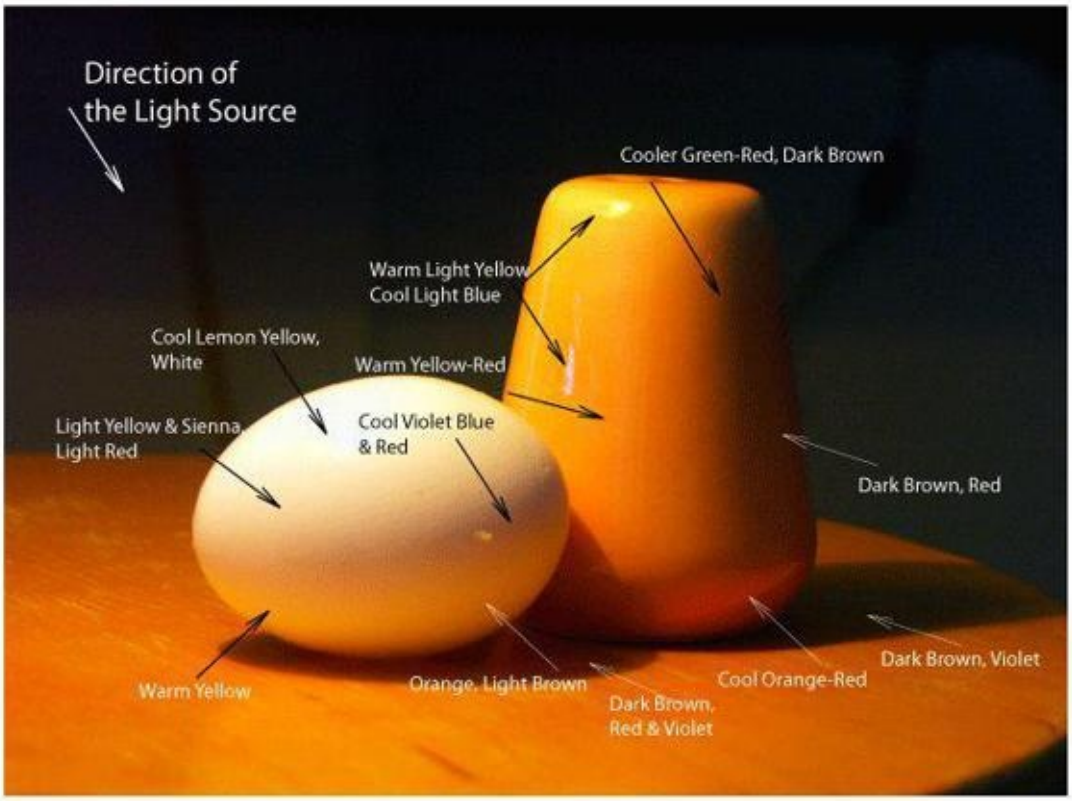


Drawing 3-Dimensional Form with Light & Shadow

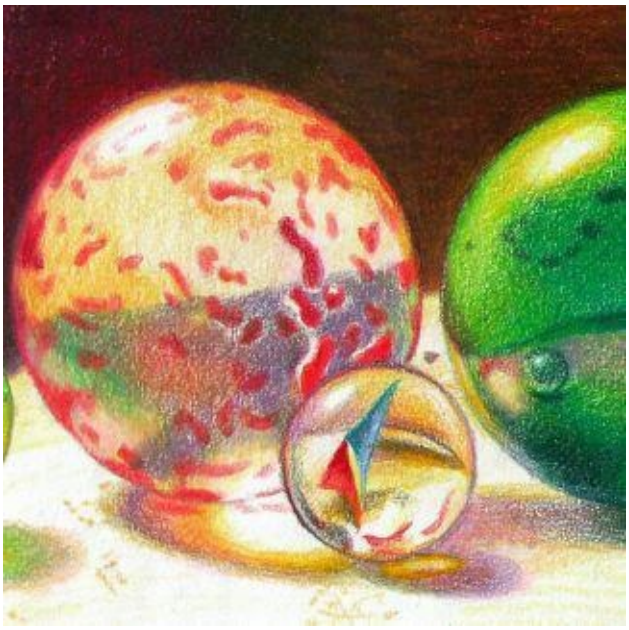
This principal drawing of a sphere and cylinder shows the relationship between light and shade. You must learn to turn the form, to make it appear realistic and three-dimensional. Copy this picture first. Then look at actual objects under strong directional light (lamp light) to see a cast shadow, a highlight and a reflected light and draw those objects too. I suggest copying apples, pears, oranges and eggs that resemble to master variations on a sphere's shape.

Also, look at cups and salt shakers to master variations on a cylinder's shape.

This picture is a good example showing strong difference between the light and shade. It also depicts color analysis. Using this image as a guide, match the contrast and the colors of your own still-life setup with the pencil colors of your choice.


Direction of
the Light Source
Cooler Green-Red, Dark Brown
Warm Light Yellow
Cool Light Blue
Cool Lemon Yellow,
White
Warm Yellow-Red
Light Yellow & Sienna
Light Red
Cool Violet Blue
& Red
Dark Brown, Red
Dark Brown, Violet
Warm Yellow
Orange, Light Brown
Cool Orange-Red
Dark Brown,
Red & Violet

Seeing Proportion



I cannot stress enough that the success of your finished piece depends on your drawing skills. Despite wonderful colors and composition, if a vase appears crooked it will diminish the appeal of your finished drawing. If your perspective is intuitive, your landscape will exhibit proportional discord. In other words, any artist (amateur or professional) must spend enough time studying an object—its shape, proportion, scale and view in perspective—to create a successful drawing.

For these and many other reasons all beginning artists must sketch out objects, understanding their form, color relationships and shadow patterns, rather than solely relying on provided outlined drawings of projects.

It is important to establish good proportions between the objects. While

sketching, I keep a grid in my mind to check the distances and relationships between all the elements in my work. How tall is the vase in comparison to its flower? How wide are the marbles in comparison to the vase? How far is the marbles' cast shadow to the table's edge?

The most striking drawings always posses strong contrast of light and shade and show relative dynamism of objects—a beautifully lit crystal vase, half-hidden in darkness; bright fruit casting long shadows across a table, describing surrounding space; a single translucent flower contrasting the emptiness of deep a blue background.

In your drawings, try creating a setup that visually attracts attention with its own abstract patterns of light and shade. Also, look at representational artwork by Caravaggio, George de La Tour and Rembrandt—all highly regarded masters of chiaroscuro painting—to better understand the concept of light and shade.

Hint: While shading, constantly turn the colored pencil to its sides to keep it sharp longer. Also, apply more pressure as you progress from light to dark in the value gradations.

Still Life with Marbles & Crystal · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2007 · private collection

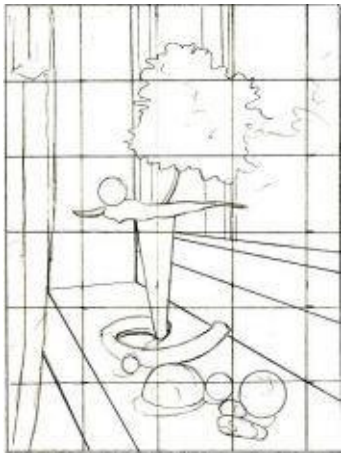
Creating an Outline

You should draw several sketches of a single still life to determine its best composition for the final drawing (see Chapter Five on Defining Composition). Because of time constraints, I tend to draw from my photographs, composing still lives with my camera's viewfinder as opposed to actual sketching. However, I did explore the compositional possibilities of sketching when I was a student.

Below are three photographs of the same still life illustrating three different points of view.

I made three sketches from these pictures to help me choose my favorite composition in terms of design and value for the final drawing. The squared image shows my final outline drawing.

As an exercise, draw three sketches of your own still life and pick the most successful composition to work on in the future.



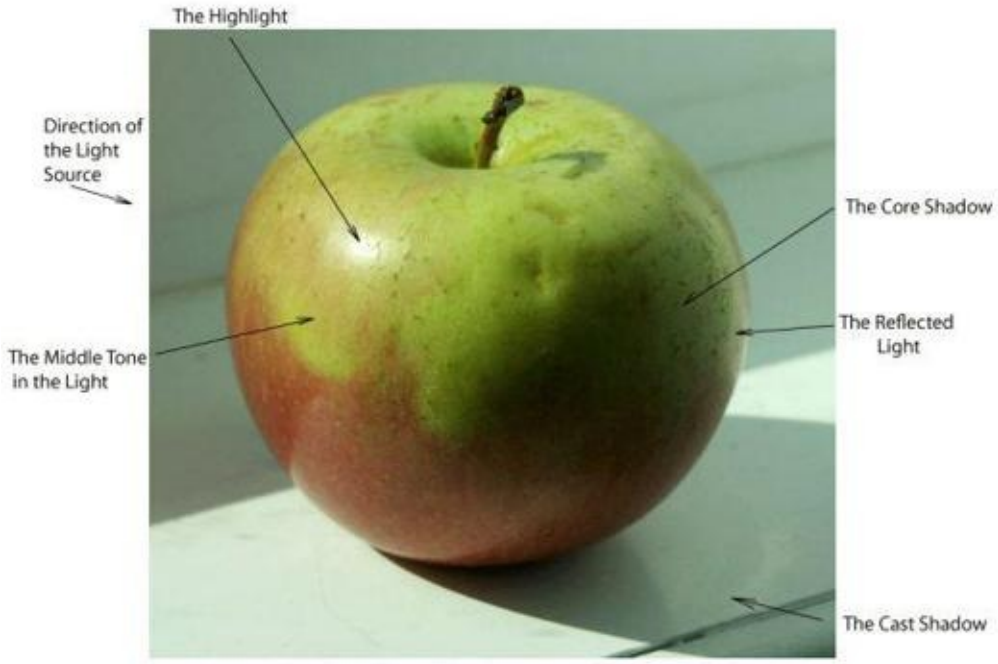
Hint: *Keep graphite lines very light*, especially in the highlights! The outlines darken even more and flatten the space out when the artist starts coloring with the colored pencils. Mark the highlight areas with a light colored pencil of “beige,” “light yellow,” “light blue” or “cream.”

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Apple

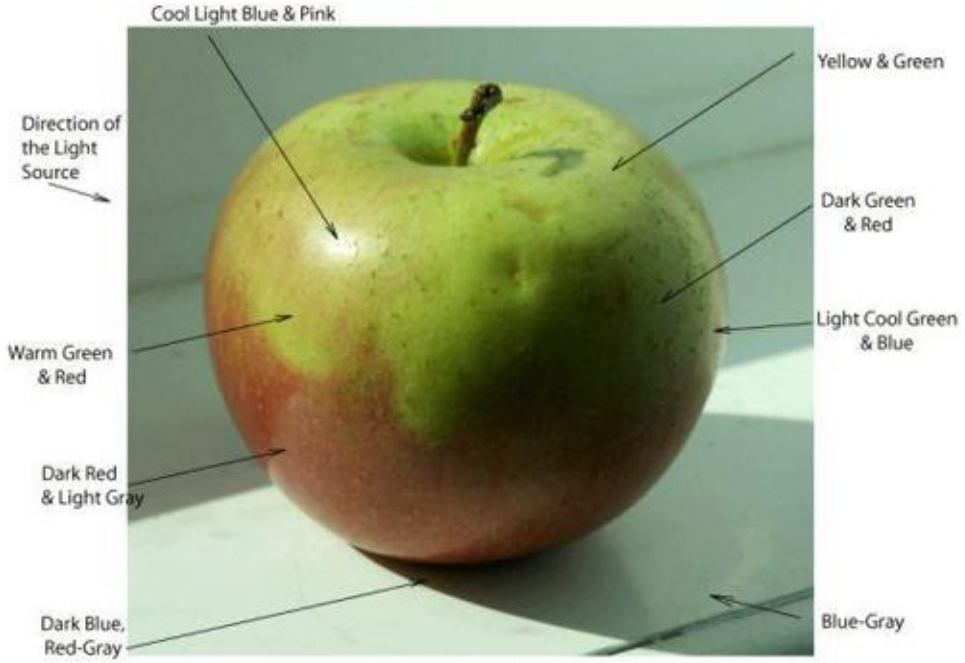
Spend some time experimenting with a still life setup of one object, either to draw from life or from a reference photo. Here, I took a picture of an apple placed under strong directional light coming from my window. Even the simplest setup of this kind requires thought about how the light will affect the colors and shadows of the fruit. I suggest you place the fruit in direct sunlight to observe how the glow sculpts its form with definite highlight and shadow. Keep the background as simple as possible.

Basic Colors: Black grape, indigo blue, dark brown, ultramarine, dark green, apple green, true green, crimson red, poppy red, sienna brown, golden rod, orange, Spanish yellow and cream.

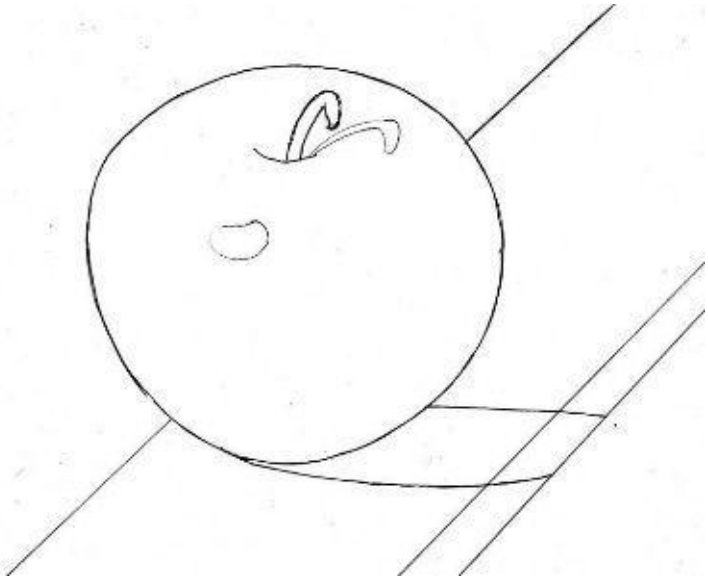
Analyze the grayscale values in the reference photo: Before placing a single mark on paper, it is important to examine the still life in color and value. These pictures illustrate my approach to analyzing these concepts. The grayscale version of the apple tells me how relatively dark it is in comparison to its background, and how strong the shadows are. The color picture informs me with warm and cool differences in hues, besides showing the obvious local colors of the fruit.



Analyze the values in your reference photo



Analyze the colors in your reference photo



Step 1: Draw the outline of the fruit on white paper. Make sure that the apple does not “fall off” the page. Show the apple’s highlight and the cast shadow. It is vital to get an accurate outline drawing: if it does not look right, coloring will not improve it. Keep graphite pencil marks light and the page clean. I use “apple green” instead of the graphite pencil to outline the form.

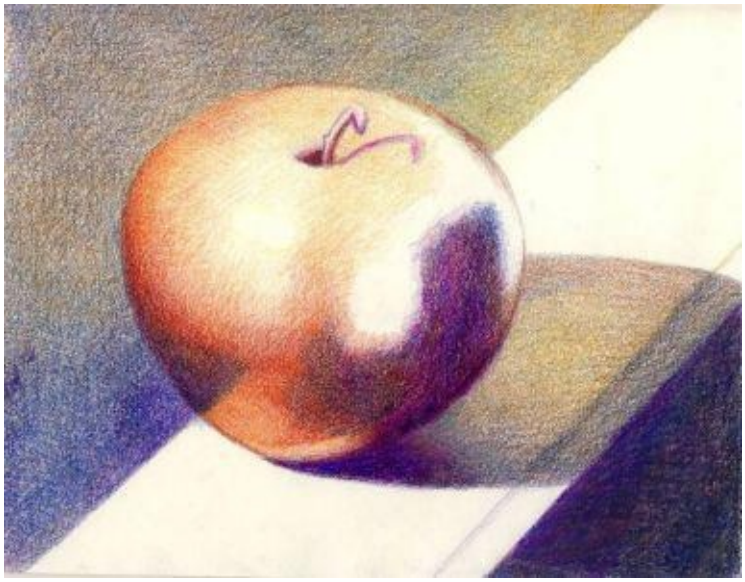
Step 2: I suggest drawing from dark to light. Find the darkest area in the apple and its background and crosshatch it with a combination of at least two dark colors—“indigo blue” and “black grape.” After that, outline the highlight with your lightest pencil. Use the paper’s original white tone for the highest light and it remains color-free.

Use “indigo blue,” “black grape” and “ultramarine” to layer the initial darks in the apple and its background, establishing a tonal design of light and shade.

Hint: Always draw with a sharp point to reduce pencil’s fleck and achieve good color saturation. The smoother the paper’s surface, the faster color application will be.

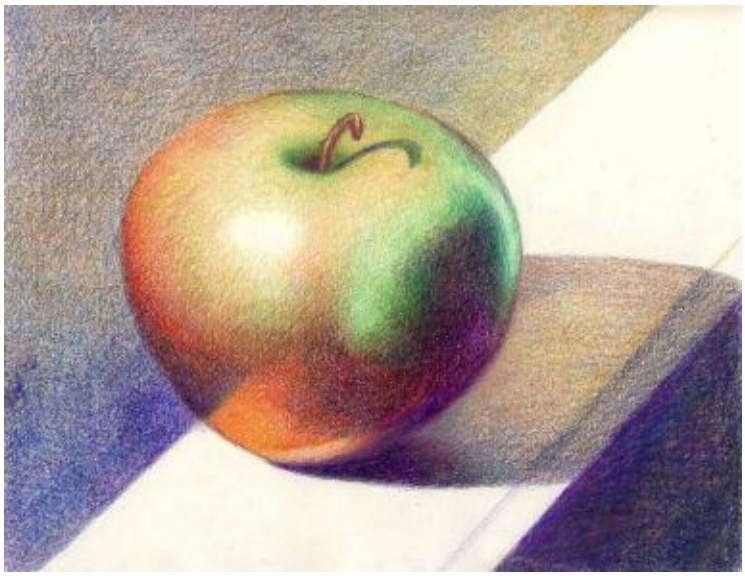
Step 3: Draw with “cream” pencil to create a light tone around the highlight. Use a combination of “dark brown,” “orange” and “golden rod” to warm-up the background and the cast shadow.

Apply a wash of mineral spirits/turpenoid to blend the surface. Keep a small brush clean and apply turpenoid slowly, moving from light to dark, since you can drag dark colors into my lighter areas by accident. Notice, colors get a lot brighter after this step.



Step 4: Add local colors into the apple, using “crimson red” and “poppy red” on its left side. Don’t afraid to “spill-over” the edges by crosshatching with these colors over previously applied tonal foundation. In this step, don’t let your drawing disappear: some lines must be crisp, others soft. Reestablish the line with a colored pencil and apply some tone right next to it. This way, it does not look outlined but remains definite.

Step 5: I burnish the surface again, using a turpenoid in the darks and the colorless blender in the lights. Also, check your values and shapes for accuracy.



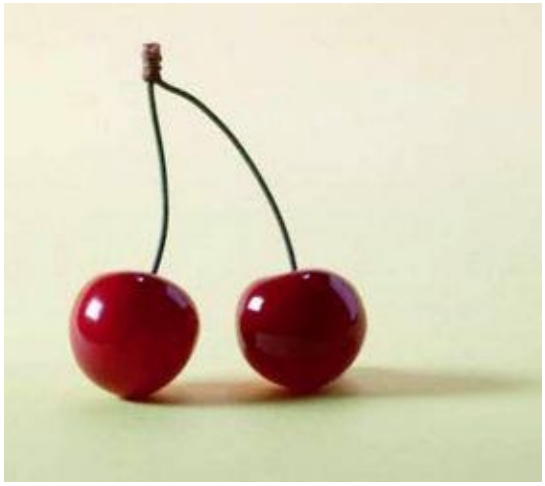
Step 6: Add a variety of greens on the right side of the apple. “Apple green” is added on the top of the fruit while “true green” and “dark green” are layered on its side. Greens mix with previously applied complementary reds, creating a nice, vibrant surface.

Red Apple · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Step 7: Last step is about adding final touches. To see those, step back from your drawing and look at it from a distance. Squint at it to check values and see what needs to be added or subtracted. Is the cast shadow harder under the object and softer further away from it? Do all colors appear unified? Is there a sharp area of interest?

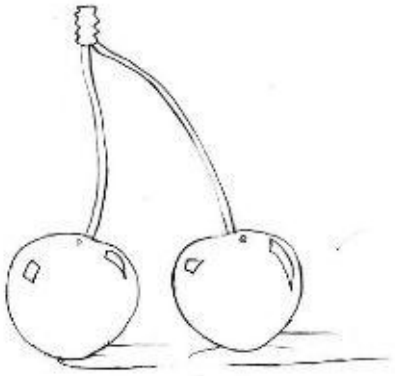
If your picture looks about the same value (midrange tone instead of high contrast), you need to darken the shadows. Finally, soften the color around the highlight with a kneaded eraser.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Cherries



This is a very simple still life that consists of a single fruit with white background. The absence of color background makes the shading quick and the cherry’s cast shadow becomes more evident.

Basic Colors: Dark purple, dark green, apple green, olive green, true green, crimson red, poppy red, mulberry, light violet, cream and cloud blue.



Step 1: Draw the cherries' outline with an HB pencil very lightly. I considerably darkened the outline here for the sake of good reproduction.

Step 2: Tap a kneaded eraser lightly over the lines to lighten your pencil outline. With varied pencil pressure, outline the cherries with “poppy red.” Layer the foundation color of fruit with “dark purple” in crosshatching strokes. Add “olive green” and “true green” in the stems.

Step 3: Burnish the cherries with a turpenoid that smoothes the surface and darkens the colors. Let this layer dry and work on the stem. After that, generously add “poppy red” and “crimson red” over the burnished surface of the cherries. Apply the same cherry colors in the cast shadow.

Step 4: Work on the cool highlights and the reflected lights. Use a combination of “light violet” and “cream” to draw the reflected lights and “cloud blue” pencil to shade around the highlight. Touch the cast shadow with the same cool colors.

Cherries · 7 x 7" (18 x 18 cm) · 2008

Step 5: Blend the colors more with the “colorless blender” to give your cherries this shiny, polished look.

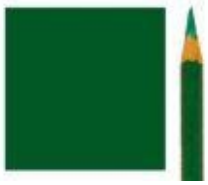
Chapter Four

Gladiolus · 18 x 24" (46 x 61 cm) · 2007 · Private collection

Understanding Color Theory & Color Mixing

"I try to apply colors like words that shape poems, like notes that shape music."-- Joan Miro

Technically, drawing in colored pencil is about layering semitransparent colors on paper to create vivid paintings. Layered hues produce fresh, exciting surfaces. It's always best to mix at least two colors in any given area, rather than drawing with a single pencil. I'm attracted to intense colors and burnishing makes them even brighter (the mineral spirits melt the wax in pencils, darkening and smoothing the surface). At the same time, burnishing is optional. My painting must have many color combinations but the surface doesn't have to be burnished to create a successful image. I always get to know my new colors by mixing them with its complements and any other colors I think will be useful to have at a glance. Artists should create a palette of these new color combinations on paper and keep it handy to be aware of the possibilities.



There are three qualities about every color: temperature, intensity and value. I will explain the color properties in this chapter. The combination of these three qualities gives paintings an illusion of depth and form. It also sets the mood for the picture. It is joyful with reds and yellows and melancholic with blues and violets.

I strongly suggest <u>not</u> being afraid of using a variety of color mixtures. Colored pencils are a very forgiving medium and unlike watercolor painting, it's impossible to produce dull, wishy-washy grays and browns (that's why Prismacolor Company manufactures gray pencils in both cool and warm temperatures to reduce the color intensity, if necessary). To sum up, here are several advantages of color mixing as opposed to single color use.

Reasons for color mixing are:

- to create rich, colorful surface
- to subdue the intensity of color
- to mix new color combinations
- to create contrast
- to develop textures

In color mixing I rely on both my “palettes” of mixed color combinations and a color wheel to make instant color choices. Let’s look at the definitions first to get a thorough understanding of color basics.

List of Terms Used in This Chapter

Hue – means color like red, yellow and blue.

Chroma – is the purity of a color or the intensity of hue like pure red or pure blue.

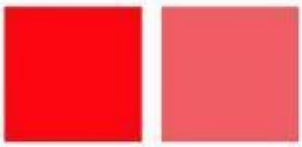
Local color – is the natural color of an object as it appears in normal light.

Beginners see only local colors in objects and resist seeing the combination of colors. Student sees a green apple and he draws it with one green pencil. (The local color is green). First, think of greens more creatively. Find both yellowish warm greens and cooler blue-greens in a fruit. Second, there is a rule of applying local colors over the complementary hues to create rich surface and to lower its intensity. The complement of green is red. Apply a bit of red under the green in the apple and see what difference in color it creates.

Complementary colors or complements – are colors that are across from each other on the color wheel, like yellow-violet, green-red and blue-orange. Use complements to neutralize some colors that don't describe the center of interest. Beautiful drawings show balance between the intense and subdued hues.

Value – is the relative lightness or darkness of a color (see Chapter Three). Notice a gradation of blue from dark to light in this picture. Value is the most important aspect in the drawing to convey the volume.

Intensity – is the saturation and purity of a color in relation to another color. In this picture pure red (high-intensity color) is bright relative to pink (medium-intensity red), but pink is still quite bright relative to grayish light pink (low-intensity red). A white lily is very bright relative to green leaves, but green leaves are also bright relative to brown water in a still life.



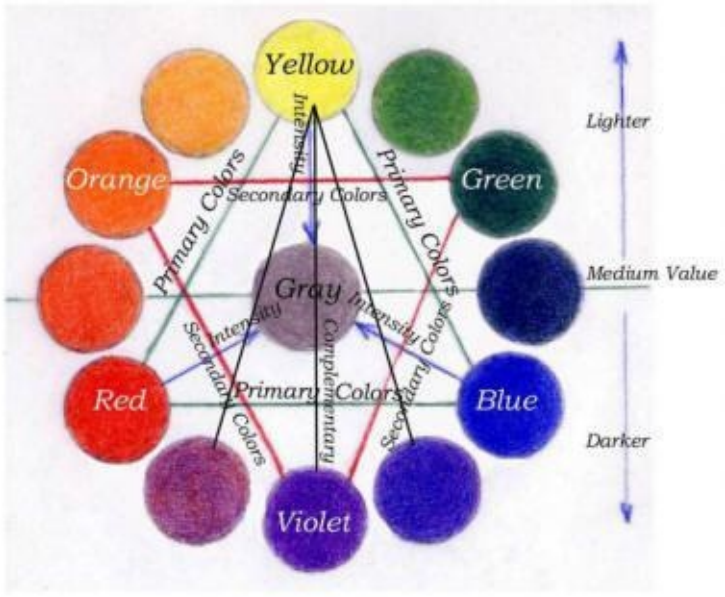
The saturation or intensity of a very bright drawing can be easily controlled by applying a small amount of complementary color over its pure hue. Knowing that the bright colors advance and the dull colors recede, I often use the bright colors in the focal point and the duller hues in the background.

Neutralized color – means less intense color, either grayed or mixed with its complement. "Blue" can be mixed with "Orange" to reduce the intensity of "Blue." "Blue" chroma can be also grayed with "Gray" pencil to do the same.

Hint: Reserve intense colors for the focal point and leave neutral tones for the background.

Color Wheel and Color Theory Applications

In color mixing artists rely on color theory that is visually organized on the color wheel.



Color wheel represents an orderly organization of color hues around a circle, explaining theoretical relationship between primary and secondary colors.

Primary colors – are red, yellow and blue that cannot be formed by mixing any other colors. All other colors are derived from these three.

Secondary colors – are orange, violet and green, created by mixing two primary colors.

Yellow +	Red =	Orange
Red +	Blue =	Violet (Purple)
Blue +	Yellow =	Green

TERTIARY

Tertiary color – is a color created by mixing a primary color with a secondary color to get a new set of colors as shown in the table below.

Primary +	**Secondary =**	**Tertiary**
Red	Orange	Red-Orange
Red	Violet	Red-Violet
Blue	Violet	Blue-Violet
Blue	Green	Blue-Green
Yellow	Orange	Yellow-Orange
Yellow	Green	Yellow-Green

MONOCHROMATIC

Monochromatic harmonies – are colors composed of variations of the same hue but different in value and intensity. For example: Red is the hue. Monochromatic harmony includes reds, pinks and maroons.

COMPLEMENTS

Complementary harmonies – are colors that are opposite each other on the "color wheel." Complements intensify each other, create visual energy and add brilliance to drawing.

Red-Green
Violet-Yellow
Blue-Orange

ANALOGOUS

Analogous harmonies – are colors adjacent to one another on the color wheel.

Red – Red-Orange –Orange
Yellow – Yellow-Green – Green, *etc.*

In “Fourteen Sunflowers in a Vase” Vincent Van Gogh painted his yellowish-orange sunflowers on relatively dark yellow table with the light-yellow background This painting represents the application of analogous harmony of yellows and oranges.

Understanding Warm and Cool Colors

Colors always played an important role in the arts of many cultures. Some colors even gained symbolic connotations and psychological impact on different communities. For example, following tradition, color green brings luck to the Irish community. Red symbolizes both passion and the devil in modern Western countries. Blue represents royalty and coldness. Yellow stands for optimism, black – for darkness and death, and so on. Colors also represent seasons and mood. I often consider psychological connotations attached to colors when designing my images.

Generally, *warm colors* – reds and yellows are associated with the sun, *cool colors* – blues and greens are associated with water, and *earth colors* are browns and olives. This broad break-up of warms and cools goes further in

understanding color temperatures.

Each hue has its warm and cool pole with its gradations in value. For example, Red is a warm hue associated with the sun. Warm color of “poppy red” (midrange value) or “crimson red” (dark value) leans toward Yellow. When Red leans toward the Blue like “carmine red” and “process red” it becomes cool.

Green hue is a cool color associated with water. Yet, “olive green” (darker value) and “apple green” (lighter value) are warm greens because they lean towards Yellow. “Aqua green,” “grass green” and “true green” (darker values) belong to the family of cool greens.

Blue hue is also associated with water. If Blue leans toward Red or Purple it’s a warm color, like “Parma violet” and “light cerulean blue” (lighter value). If Blue leans toward Turquoise it becomes cool, like “ultramarine” (darker value).

By knowing the color temperatures the artist has the control over the picture, especially landscape drawings. Generally, cooler colors recede in space. (The mountains have bluish –purplish tonal gradations, for instance). Warmer colors – yellows, reds and browns advance into the foreground. (Red tulips create a center of interest in a landscape drawing).

Conscious play with color temperatures creates an illusion of depth in painting. Below I list a few further tips on color mixing.

Mixing High-Intensity Colors

• Mixing two bright colors reduces the intensity of both hues.

• A mix of two low-intensity colors looks as complex as a mix of several high-intensity colors.

• Juxtaposing intense colors instead of crosshatching them creates a different visual impact. Juxtapose cool-green grass field and warm-red bands of poppies (shown here). Or juxtapose cooler grays with warmer reds and yellows.

Mixing Beautiful Grays

Unlike watercolors and oils colored pencils do not mix to grays. *Prismacolor* Company offers many pencils of both warm and cool tones with a wide range of values:

Warm Grey 10%, Warm Grey 20%, Warm Grey 30%, Warm Grey 50%, Warm Grey 70% and Warm Grey 90%;

Cool Grey 10%, Cool Grey 20%, Cool Grey 30%, Cool Grey 50%, Cool Grey 70% and Cool Grey 90%;

French Grey 10%, French Grey 20%, French Grey 30%, French Grey 50%, French Grey 70%, French Grey 90%.

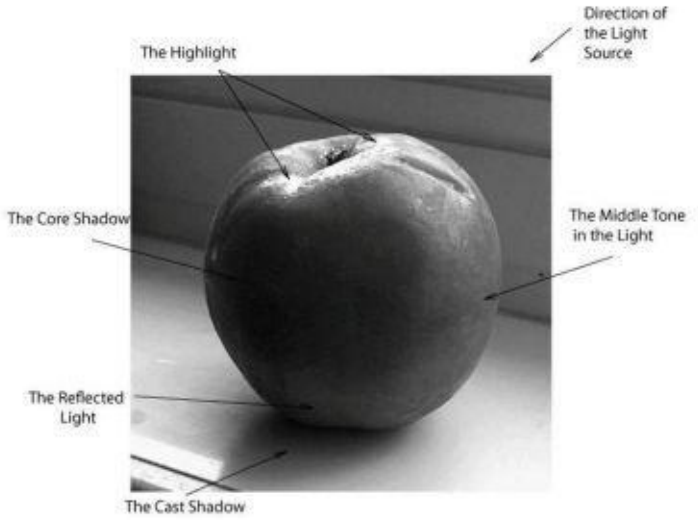
In the picture, Grey is juxtaposed with pure Red and Blue. Notice, how even more intense these colors become sited on Grey surface.

Hint: When designing a still life, keep the focal point bright and the background somewhat muted and grey.

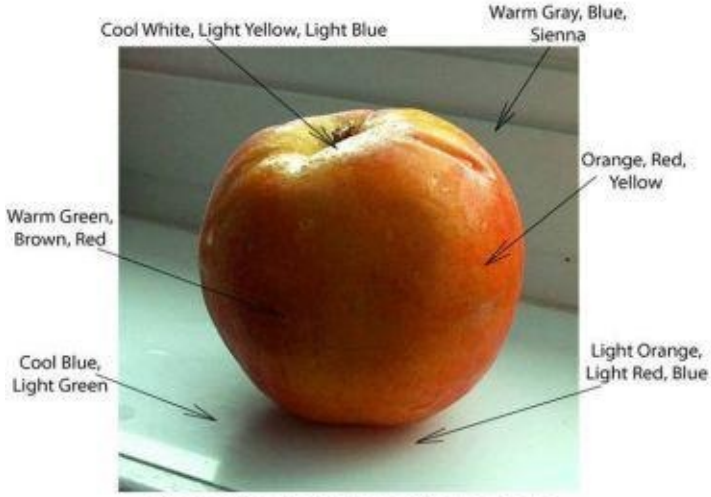
Now, let’s practice. Each project listed here is dedicated to general understanding of a color, color temperatures and color mixing.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Peach

This project is focused on generous layering of warm tones in a fruit with the use of various color combinations. Cool colors are also added to create necessary tension between warm and cool for maximum visual impact.



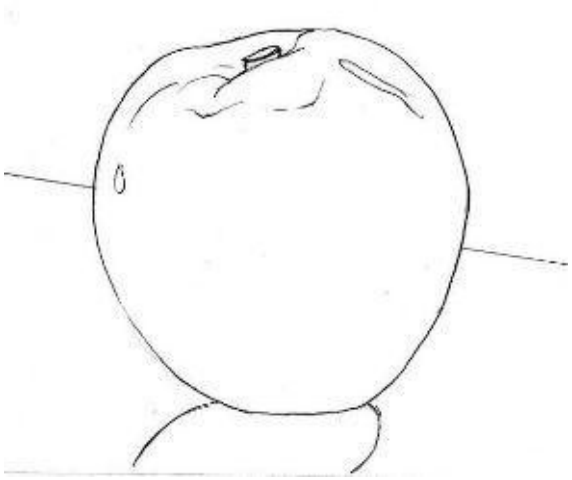
Analyze values in your reference photo



Analyze the colors in your reference photo

Basic Colors: Tuscan Red, olive green, grass green, apple green, sienna brown, crimson red, poppy red, mulberry, lilac, orange, sunburst yellow or Spanish orange, canary yellow, yellow chartreuse, white, and cool grey 50%.

Step 1: Just like in previous demonstration evaluate values, colors and composition.



Step 2: Draw the outline.

Step 3: I tap a kneaded eraser lightly over the lines to lighten my pencil outline. I've decided to make the background white to focus on the peach and its cast shadow more. I draw the core shadow with "olive green" and the cast shadow with "Tuscan red." I draw with yellows around the highlights. "Poppy red" pencil outlines the fruit.

Step 4: With varied pressure and multidirectional stroke I apply “crimson red” over the entire peach surface, leaving the highlights untouched.

Step 5: A wash of mineral spirits is applied over the entire image. The colors become much brighter and the surface gets smoother. Wait till it dries.

Step 6: Varying pencil pressure, I draw the cast shadow with “grass green.” The cast shadow right under the peach is very dark and crisp and contains some peach color. It becomes softer and lighter further away. I use “poppy red” and “orange” to draw over the dry surface of fruit. I also touch up yellow highlights with “olive green.”

Step 7: After establishing this basic, vivid, warm tone I work on textural details. With sharp pencil lead of “crimson red” I draw random grain to imitate the fruit’s texture.

Next, I consider differences in color temperature. To cool off the surface, I use “mulberry,” “lilac” and “cool grey 50%,” drawing the reflected light on the sides. The same grey color is added in the cast shadow.

Peach · 7 x 7 inches · (18 x 18 cm) · 2008

Step 8: I evaluate my values from the distance and adjust minute details. I burnish a few areas with “white” and finish with colorless blender.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Orchid

This demonstration focuses on layering cool color tones in the flower and adding dark color combinations in the background.

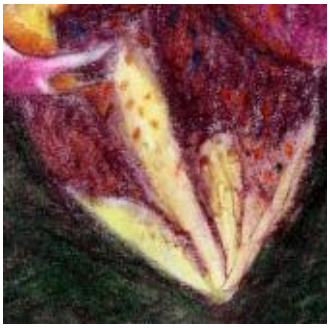
Basic Colors: Black cherry, dark green, indigo blue and chocolate (the background color mix).

True green, apple green, lime green, yellow ochre, Spanish orange, poppy red, mulberry, process red, powder blue and white.

Step 1: I draw an outline, after evaluating the values in my grayscale picture. The lightest area is the flower’s center and the darkest area is the background. Orchid is placed at slight diagonal on the paper.

Step 2: I block in the background with varied strokes and heavy pressure of “black cherry,” “indigo blue” and “dark green.” Despite its density, the foundation layer still shows the overlapping of these colors.

Step 3: This step establishes basic layout of light and shade using cool colors. With a sharp pencil point and varied pressure I block in all the shadows in the orchid with “black cherry.” I blend the entire painting surface with a turpenoid and let it dry. After this step the orchid should look three-dimensional.

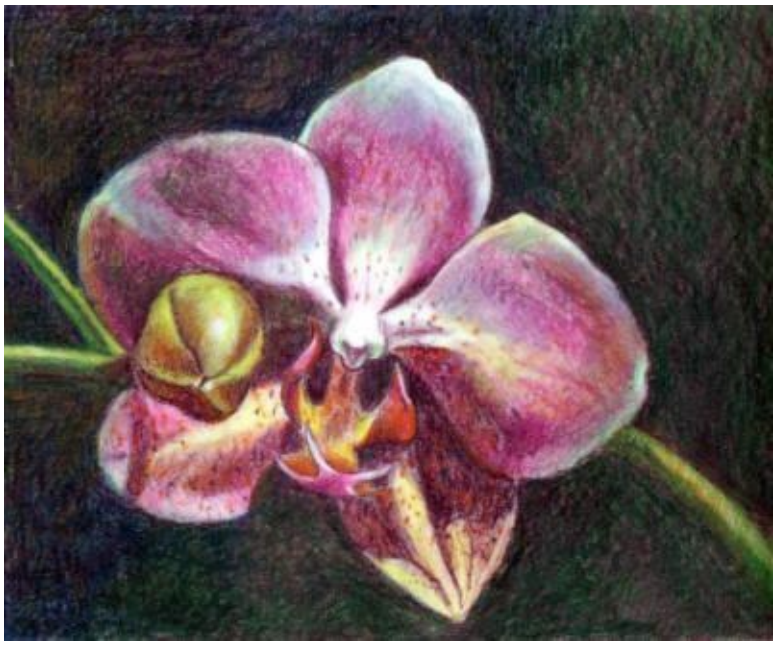


Step 4: This step is about “warming-up” the orchid, using “Spanish yellow” and “poppy red” over two lower petals of the flower.

Step 5: I work on the focal point now. With dark colored pencil I outline the orchid's center. Notice, how many warm and cool colors I have in one area. Use the same colors of "poppy red," "mulberry," "Spanish orange" and "dark cherry" to create the dotted texture of the flower at this time.

Step 6: Add the cool tone of “powder blue” or “light cerulean blue” over petals. Light blue hue mixed with “process red” creates visual tension between the cool upper petals and warm lower petals.

Step 7: I draw the closed orchid with a warm mix of “poppy red” and “apple green.” Previously applied cool dark layer still shows through. I reestablish lost edges with “black cherry.”



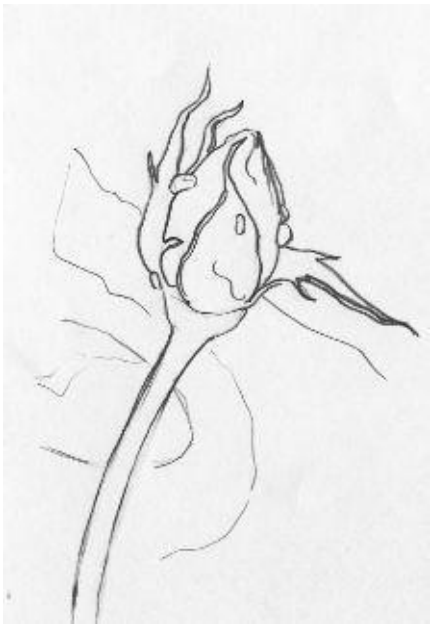
Pink Orchid · 5 x 6" (13 x 15 cm) · 2008

Step 8: I darken the background even further with the same dark color combination. I burnish it with the mineral spirits. I use colorless blender in the orchid to finish blending in my drawing.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Rose Blossom

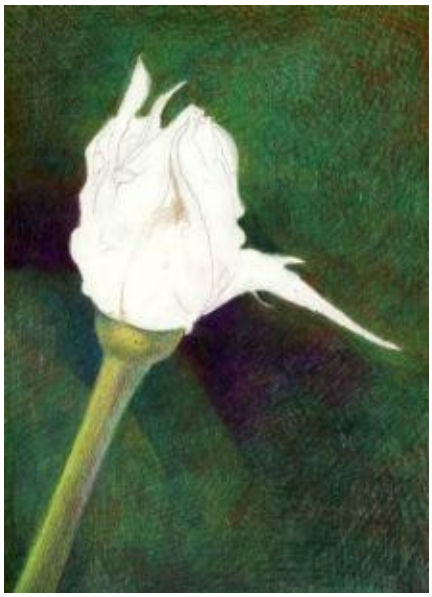
This project focuses on layering varied warm and cool greens in a picture. The image consists of a single subject to simplify the task. The beginners also follow the steps learning to draw the dews.

Basic Colors: black cherry, indigo blue, Tuscan red, chocolate, dark green and true green (dark background mix); true green, apple green, lime green, yellow ochre, poppy red, process red, light cerulean blue and white.



Step 1: I evaluate the values by looking at my image in the grayscale format. Where are the darkest dark and the highlight? The background is relatively dark and the turning petal is the lightest light. Everything else falls into the middle tone gradations.

Make an outline. By placing the blossom off-center, I strike a balance between my focal point and the negative space.



Step 2: I simplify and darken the background intentionally to make the center of interest apparent. I crosshatch the background with a color combination of “indigo blue,” “Tuscan red,” “dark green” and “true green.” I brush turpenoid over the background to blend the surface and wait till it dries.

Step 3: I layer the core shadow in the stem, using “poppy red” – the complementary color of green. I also add reds in the background. I draw with warm greens on the stem’s left side and add light blue on its right side.

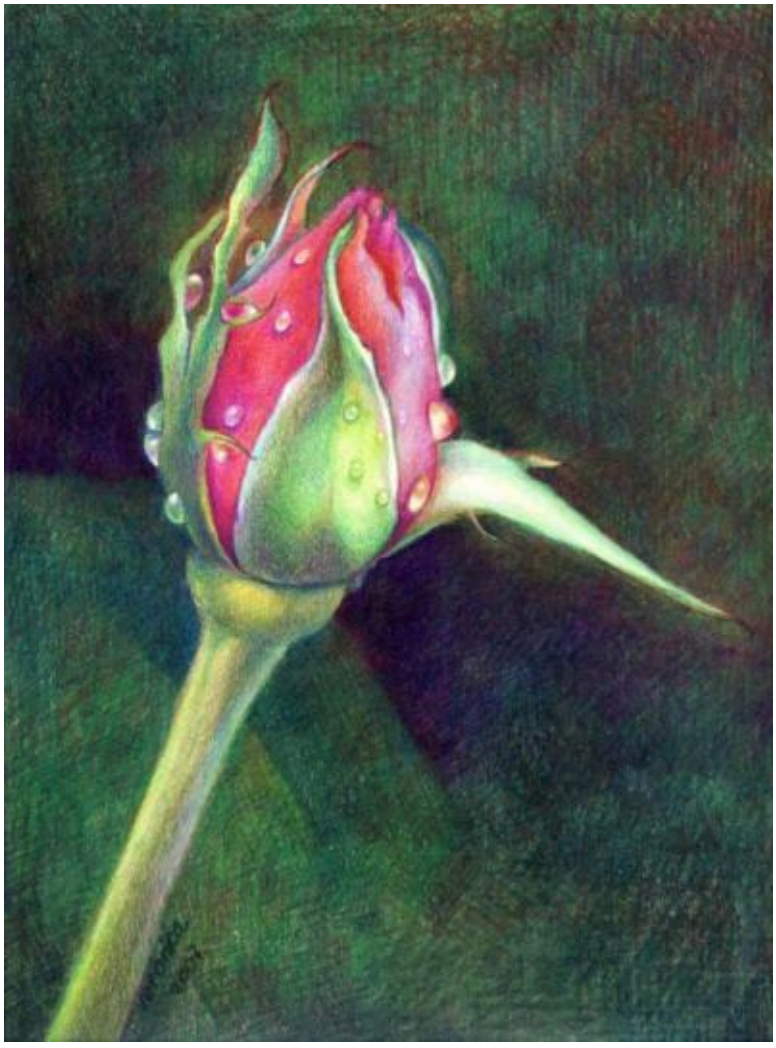
Step 4: I work on the rose blossom drawing with various pinks. I leave white spaces around the dews. I define the leaves with sharp outlines of green and “poppy red.” I draw the core shadows of the leaves relatively dark to create a better sense of volume. Notice, the green stem is warm and also green leaves are a bit cooler.

Step 5: Dews repeat colors of the surface they sit on. They can be elongated or round. Below is the picture showing general drawing of the dews.

1. Make a circle or an oval shape for the dew with “cream” pencil.
2. Cast a shadow from it.
3. Color the cast shadow with relatively dark object’s local hue.
4. Create a highlight on the opposite side of the cast shadow. Use gentle feathering strokes of light colors placed around the highlight.
5. Add more color variation around the dews and inside them. I use Yellow in this picture.
6. Finish up by blending the surface with colorless blender. Notice, both the white highlight and the reflected light are paper’s original color.

Hint: The dews must have the same color combination that the flower has, only be more transparent and smooth.

Step 6: I made final adjustments to the values and edges. I used the colorless blender to complete the drawing.



Rose Blossom · 18 x 24" (46 x 61 cm) · 2006

Chapter Five

Still Life with Marbles & Crystal · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm)

Understanding Composition

“Art is not what you see, but what you make others see.” --Degas

Every painting should evoke a thought. Some artists find motivation in painting traditional still lives and landscapes; others draw inspiration from their imagination or artistic ideas of the past. Whatever the creative subject matter is, understanding the principals of organizing various visual elements into a unified composition is essential for artists. Knowledge of design elements, such as line, form, color, texture, direction, size, perspective and space, help the artist create stunning artwork, making the picture sing in color, shapes and lines.

With knowledge of this visual vocabulary painter creates harmony on flat surface of paper. Good design attracts the viewers, directing their sight around the drawing and leading it to the center of interest. Objects of various weight, shape and size can be easily unified and balanced in relation to the center of page and each other. Even a single object with plain negative space can become a striking art image. Successful compositional placement, rhythm and overlapping of elements also help exploring endless creative possibilities on paper. If one or more compositional elements are missing, the drawing fails. That’s why let’s look at the basics of composition more closely to expand the creative possibilities.

List of Terms Used in This Chapter

Composition – is the balanced arrangement of elements by artist in his or her painting.

Line – is the visual path that moves the eye within the painting.

Shape – is the organic or geometric area contoured by edges within the painting.

Size – are the relative dimensions and proportions of objects or shapes to one another.

Space – is the area of the objects or shapes themselves (positive) or area in between objects (negative).

Positive space – is the “filled” space in a picture, the primary subject of a painting occupied with objects, lines and shapes.

Negative space – is the “empty” space around and between the objects (usually the background space). Negative space can form an artistically relevant shape and be an effective element in the composition.

Proportion – is comparative relation between things as to size and quantity with a sense of harmony, symmetry and balance

Overlapping – is covering with a design, in which one element or pencil stroke covers a part of another.

Texture – is the roughness or smoothness of any surface, an illusion of feeling in our drawing.

Unity – is a sense of harmony or completeness in painting.

Creating Winning Paintings

Let’s look at important components of the drawing, which collectively ensure the success of the artwork.

- Concept behind the drawing or distinctive style (What is the main idea? Why is it important to convey in art?)
- Composition (What is so attractive about the picture?)
- Skill or technique (professionalism of the artist)
- Color choices (What are the emotions portrayed behind the image?)
- Textural effects of objects
- Light (What is the lighting conditions conveying the particular mood?)
- Reflections
- Shadows
- Unity of the piece

These entire elements contribute to making a winning painting and the artist should constantly strive for making progress in each aspect of it to produce good art. Consequently, this chapter is dedicated to the nuts and bolts of good concept and compositional design in painting.

Concept: Like the old masters and many contemporary artists almost every creative soul arrives at the personal style with time. By exploring the

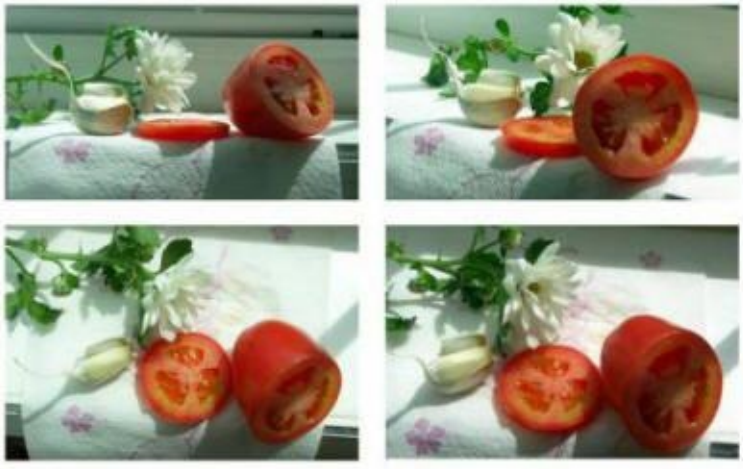
possibilities, making mistakes, fixing those and practicing the artist constantly improves and achieves new heights in his art. After producing the first one hundred drawings, the difficulties fade, creativity grows, and the artwork develops. I find it important and helpful to look at art of other contemporaries in the museums, galleries, magazines, books and online! It allows me to grow professionally both in my skill and vision. I not only compare and learn from others but also derive my inspiration from their paintings to work on my own art. The artist should have time to explore diverse approaches in the art-making and be hardworking enough, persistent and devoted to his course in life. It is important to always keep a positive attitude towards the painting and to remember never, never, EVER give up!

Hint: Find a solution to the creative problem by seeking feedback from the relatives and friends or better yet by talking to a professional artist. A wealth of valuable information can be obtained at no cost to you!

Composition: I often see students being anxious and in a hurry to color their quick outline. We are impatient with ourselves and our artwork. We want to achieve the results and create a masterpiece very fast. However, I always end up spending more time fixing my sloppy outlines and trying to resolve serious compositional mishaps, if no preparatory sketching is done. Thus, *strong compositions result from knowledge, practice and artistic intuition.* Technically, c*omposition* means to have balanced arrangement of elements on paper. Let’s explore the possibilities of arranging these elements and witness the process of sketching.

Developing Successful Compositions

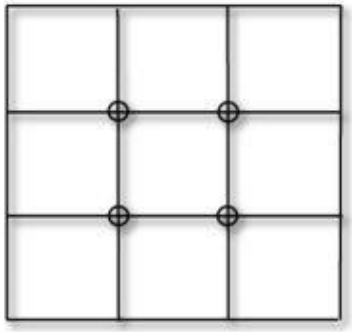
To practice, make three thumbnail sketches of the same still life drawn from multiple points of view. In quick lines outline the composition with simplified shapes of circles, spheres and rectangles that represent actual objects.



To achieve better composition get rid of empty background space by zooming in to your objects. Think of creating a close-up view with a single point of interest. When composing the still life, place large object first and surround it with smaller shapes. When composing the landscape, keep the important shapes in the foreground.

Look at three or four sketches from the distance and choose the most interesting one for the outline drawing. Here, I made “sketches” with my camera, using zoom lens as my viewfinder for cropping.

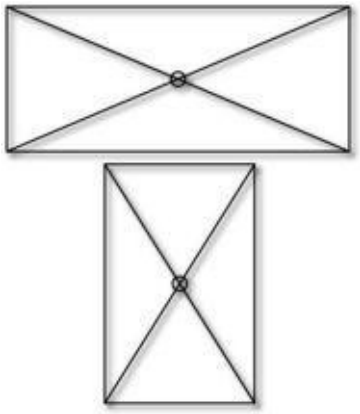
For many students, who have less intuition in compositional design, composition remains tough and mysterious. Fortunately, there are many aids available nowadays to create visually pleasing compositions and the artists should take advantage of those if their insight has not developed yet. One of the most popular ones is the “rule of thirds,” which highlights human perception of beauty.



1. The Golden Section or "*Rule of two thirds"* inspired and fascinated minds of Greek mathematicians, Greco-Roman artists, the 19th century landscape painters and contemporary photographers and fine artists. *Rule of Thirds* means placing the focal point off-center in exact one third of the page either horizontally or vertically.

Divide the page into thirds in both horizontal and vertical directions. The cross-points on the grid are potential focal points for the painting. Find the center of interest in one of the four junctions with detailed object placed in it. It becomes the center of interest that might be a tree, boat, stone, person, barn, etc., depending on the main idea for the painting.

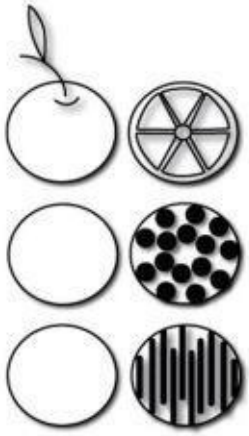
2. When outdoors, use a slide *viewfinder* or a picture mat to zoom into the picture and crop any extra information spilling over the frame. The viewfinder filters tons of details and focuses the artist on a few key elements instead. If drawing from life, place it in front of you and look through it or move the viewfinder around over the photo to determine the most dynamic composition. In this picture I place my picture mat over the tiger's upper body and focus on its face, rather than on the entire image.



3. As opposed to the “rule of thirds” this strategy focuses on *determining the center of interest* by dividing the picture plane diagonally from corner to corner in both directions, where the intersection point becomes the center or the focal point. Then, the artist can line up the objects over one of the diagonal lines and place main object in the center of interest.

4. One more strategy for determining the center of interest is to consider having a shape stacked inside the other shape, like placing a round apple or other fruit inside an oval plate or box.

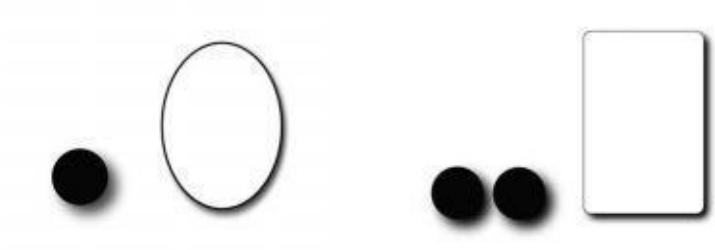
5. When the artist has determined the center of interest he also needs to think of balance and unity in his picture. To balance the picture, I often juxtapose a *smooth* object with the *textural* one or *smooth* form with objects with *patterns*.



A textured shape looks heavier than a smooth form of the same size, so I think of the size relationships between the objects too.

To practice, place a smooth ceramic vase next to textural half a kiwi or spotted lily.

6. I also balance the picture by juxtaposing objects *different in value* where large light shape balances a small dark one. For example, place a big white onion next to a small cherry or a tall transparent bottle next to a small red carnation and see what visual impact they have.



7. In addition to this, two or more small forms can balance a single large shape. Two little cherries balance one big yellow apple or orange. Two or three small marbles often balance one big vase in my drawings.

8. It is good to see that a single dark form is visually heavier than a light one of the same size. A book on a shelf with a deep blue cover visually dominates the book with the light cover or a red rose in a vase dominates the white carnation of the same size.

Great painters think abstractly while painting figuratively. Good compositions consist of simple abstract design in shapes and color.

9. One of the strategies to create an *abstract pattern* either in the background or as a design per se, it is good to repeat the same shapes at equal distances. I like looking at the wall papers or tiles to get more ideas for my designs.

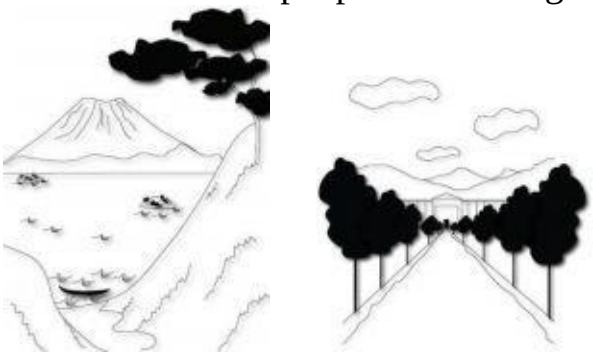
10. Good abstract painters often favor the *rhythmic design*, in which one shape is varied in size and moved across the page in curves or zigzags or waves. This concept requires a lot of experimentation that is definitely fun.

11. I try to create the beautiful design in my painting, relying on big, balanced, proportional relationships or geometric patterns. Meticulously painted tiny details loose their impact if the artwork misses big shape relationships. One of my favorite strategies is *overlapping.* Overlapping a few elements over the focal point helps to establish rhythm in drawing. In this image the big vase with flowers is overlapped by some grapes and a small cup.

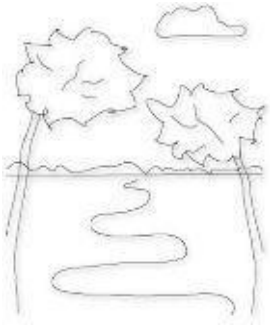
12. I also like to incorporate the *negative space* into the image. Dynamic

negative shapes (spaces that are around your objects forming the background) form a pattern and draw attention to the focal point in the picture. The simplicity of the background often draws more attention to the focal point.

13. Being creative with the *vantage point* makes a big difference in the image design. Most of us take pictures at an eye level. When shooting pictures, lower yourself or climb up to arrive at unusual point of view. The vantage point adds up to the significance of the center of interest. The Impressionists were fascinated with the Japanese prints and woodcuts because the Japanese artists used the bird-eye-view composition in their landscape painting. The Impressionists borrowed this design strategy from them and painted busy French streets looking from the roofs down onto people and carriages.



14. Japanese artists also liked to cut off the objects and figures on the sides of the picture plane. This intentional measure created unusual compositional tension and immediacy of the moment. Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec and many other Impressionists loved this idea, borrowed and explored it in their art. In this picture the ballerina’s figure to the right is cut off intentionally, making the viewer an active participant in the painting.



15. In landscape drawing I like to “frame” the image with trees on both sides of the picture. I learnt this principle from the French landscape painter Claude Lorrain.

In still life painting I “frame” the picture with fabric or other objects. In drawing an interior space I “frame” the picture with a doorway. This visual “framing” allows a viewer to wonder around the picture in circles without leaving the picture.

16. In landscape drawing I use leading lines of fences, rivers or roads to direct the viewer to the center of interest. Perspective allows the artist to create the depth of field by drawing the receding paths and rivers.

Hint: Make it a habit to look at the drawing from the distance, through a mirror or turning the picture up-side-down. The design faults or other errors show up instantly in the reflection. I use this tool to solve my compositional problems at all stages of my drawing.

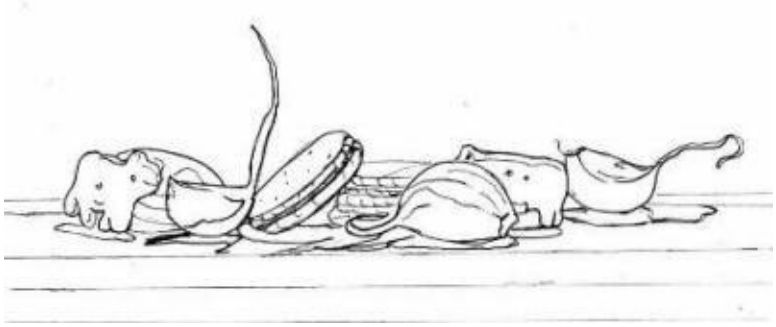
Step-by-Step Demonstration: Still Life with Three Objects

When arranging a still life (the easiest subject matter to start from) I look for the quality of light that creates striking shadow patterns. Especially for beginners it is much easier to paint images with sharp contrast. To illustrate my point here, I take several pictures of the same subject matter and select the most intriguing composition with strong contrast of light and shade.

Remember the value scale? Think more of value relationships, not color when choosing a picture or a still life to work on.

Here is the example of my final still life arrangement in color and in black-and-white. The grayscale version helps me to see value relationships (contrast) between the objects.

Basic Colors: dark brown, dark purple, indigo blue, crimson red, poppy red, sienna brown, lilac, yellow ochre, Spanish orange, light cerulean blue and white.



Step 1: I transfer my final outlined drawing onto white paper with an HB pencil. I keep my pencil marks very light and tap them with the kneaded eraser if needed.

Step 2: Varying pencil pressure, I block in the negative space (everything around the objects). I set the dark values in my picture by drawing over the entire image with a warm color combination of “dark brown” and “dark purple.” I look for shadows under the objects and preserve the white areas.

Step 3: In this step I build contrast and tone. First, I burnish the surface with a solvent (turpenoid) and a small brush. I let it dry.

To “cool off” the surface I add “indigo blue” in the darkest darks and “light cerulean blue” in the rest of the background. I like to be liberal with colors and draw with a variety.

I apply “poppy red” in the tomato slice and add the same red in the reflected light of other objects in a still life. I also layer it in the background.

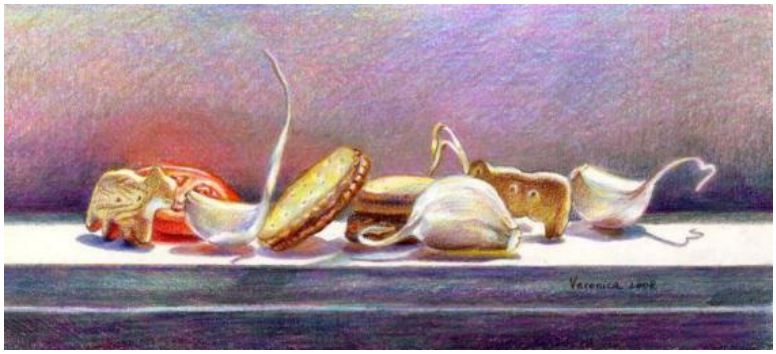
Step 4: In this step I work on texture and color of the objects that make up my still life. With varied directional strokes I draw the crackers with browns and yellows. Notice that crackers reflect other colors – the light blue and red.

I outline some edges for crispness, and work on soft shadows under the crackers. I don’t burnish the crackers’ surface because I like its texture.

If previously burnished surface in the background gets too waxy and doesn’t accept more pencil work, a small amount of workable fixative can be sprayed over the picture. It helps to restore the paper’s tooth and allows for additional layering.

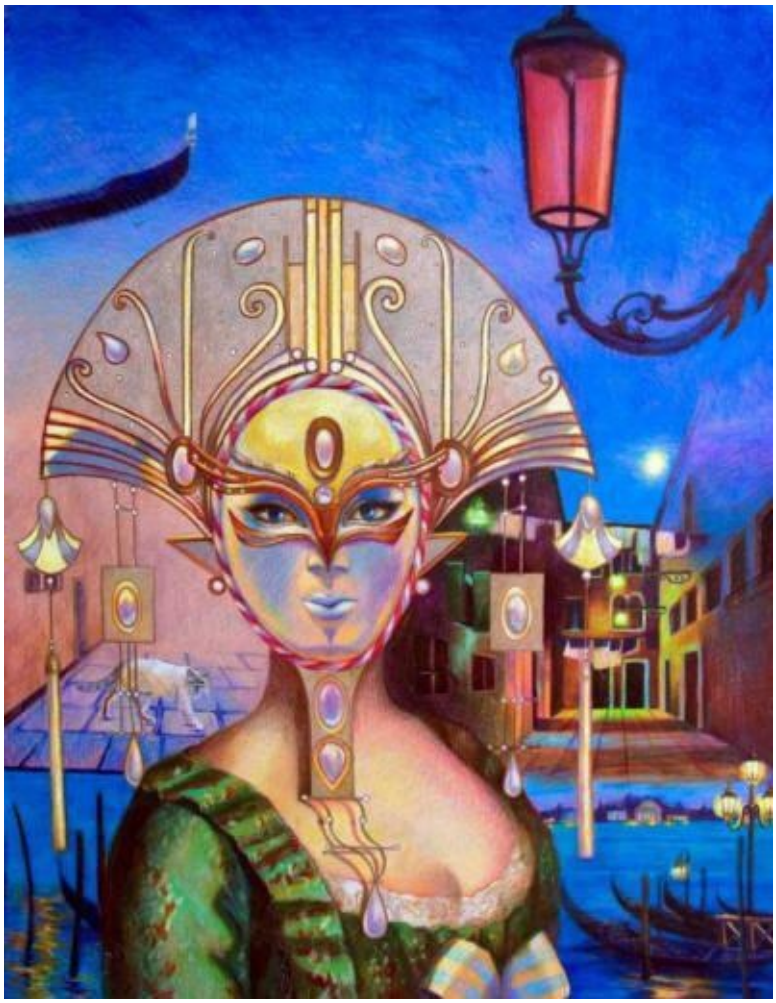
Step 5: I work on the garlic. I start with “sienna brown” in the shadows and carefully add lighter colors of “lilac,” “yellow ochre” and “light cerulean blue.” I place similar color combinations under the objects.

I step back and evaluate my drawing from the distance. I burnish the surface more with lighter pencils or colorless blender where necessary.



Conversation · 5.5 x 11.5" (14 x 29 cm) · 2008

Chapter Six

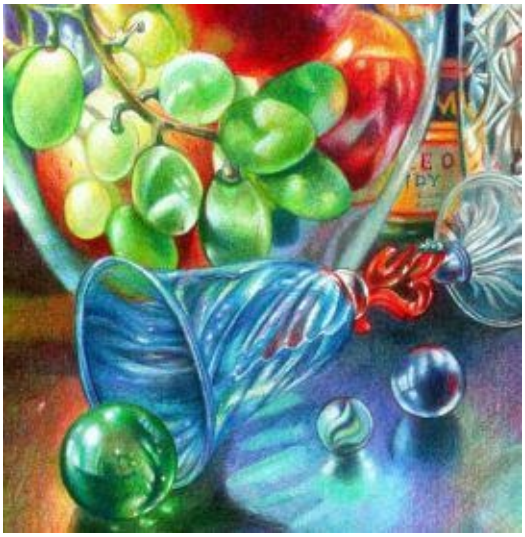


Mystery of Venice III · 19 x 25" (48 x 63 cm) · 2009

Adding Texture & Tone: Glass, Wood, Limestone & Fabric

"A painter's monument is his work…" -- W. Somerset Maugham

Beautiful drawings show artistic understanding of both man-made structures and natural forms. Correct representation of nature is developed through close observation, constant practice and accumulated artistic experience. Leonardo studied nature primarily as a scientist, where his exceptionally accurate drawings were the byproduct of his scientific experiments and explorations. In the history of art, Nicolas Poussin is regarded as the founder of French classical painting. Famous for his scrupulous perfection of his historic landscape painting, Poussin was inspired by nature and studied its complexity. He rearranged and recreated nature in his balanced compositions of people and buildings. Vincent Van Gogh derived his inspiration from nature as well, and like many other Impressionists, painted outdoors. John Singer Sargent, the notorious painter of royalty, always sketched from life. This close observation of forms and shapes should be an everlasting process for the artist, even when there is no access to pencils and paper.



That is how I try to approach my drawing. I observe my possible "subjects" for my art closely at all times. When painting glass, I repeat the exact shapes of the reflections I see in a vase. Drawing fabric, I look for the line curvature, a core shadow and the colors of a reflected light. Painting soft, feathery objects I pay attention to hair direction and line variation. Smooth, rough, shiny, opaque or any other textures you see can be recreated on paper with practice, determination and willingness to observe your chosen subject matter.

List of Terms Used in This Chapter

Underpainting –the first layer of a painted image, done in one color with tonal gradations of light and shade. The most common color for underpainting is black, sienna brown or blue.

Hint: Remember that there are no straight lines in nature. In contrast, man-made structures are usually composed of parallel and straight lines. That is why it is helpful to use a ruler to draw straight lines and measure distances when drawing landscapes with barns and streets with buildings (see Chapter Ten on perspective drawing).

Let's look at various textures and practice reproducing them realistically on paper.

Transparency of Glass

It is fascinating to see sparking glass objects that seem to be impossible to recreate on a flat surface. Their reflective plane is illusive, changing and complex—and that’s exactly what attracts me to painting such objects. It’s certainly a challenging subject matter for beginners, however, and probably should be reserved for a day when you’ve already had plenty of practice drawing simple still life and landscape projects.

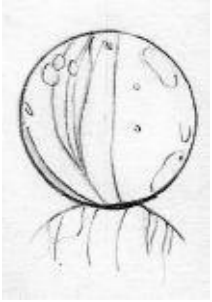
To capture the transparency of glass realistically, it is crucial to preserve the highlights that exactly follow the shape or contour of the object. It is also important to keep the lines straight if it is a bottle, and have symmetrical line curvature on both sides in a cup or a vase.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Marble

Basic Colors: black, dark brown, cerulean blue, dark green, violet, lilac, ultramarine and white. Other colors can be added or substituted for the hues mentioned here.

I like drawing glass and marbles from photographs because the reflections don’t change and the marbles don’t roll all over my table.

Here is reference photo and its black and white version.



Step 1: Evaluate the patterns of light and shade in the grayscale reference photo. Draw the outline. If you don’t have a template ruler at hand, use coin to make a perfect circle. Next, draw shapes inside of it and mark the highlights.

Step 2: Tap a kneaded eraser lightly over the lines to lighten your pencil outline. Use a sharp point with medium pressure to block in the negative space (around the marble) with a combination of “black” and “dark brown.” It also includes the marble’s reflection.

With light pressure, add the darks inside the marble, feathering out the edges around the highlights.

Step 3: Color the marble with a combination of “cerulean blue” and “dark green.” Use the same colors in marble’s reflection. Add other hues, if needed.

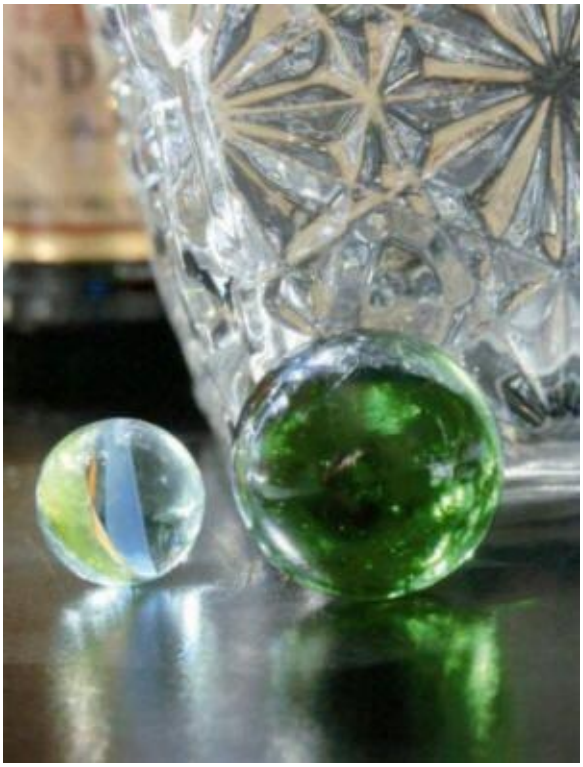
Step 4: Add more color into the same areas, like “lilac,” “violet” and “sienna brown.” Feel free to add more color if necessary.

Always think of the roundness of the form when shading and remember not to cover the crucial lights. To keep my marble nice and round I use a very sharp point of “ultramarine” to outline it again. This blue blends with the negative space without sacrificing the roundness of the form.

Step 5: Burnish the surface around the highlights with the sharp point of a “white” pencil. Blend thetexttext-indent: 0.25in; text-indent: 0.25in; text-indent: 0.25in; reflection with either “white” pencil or colorless blender. Darken the background by burnishing it with colorless blender or a solvent (turpenoid).

Step-by-Step Demonstration for Advanced Students: Two Marbles and Crystal Vase

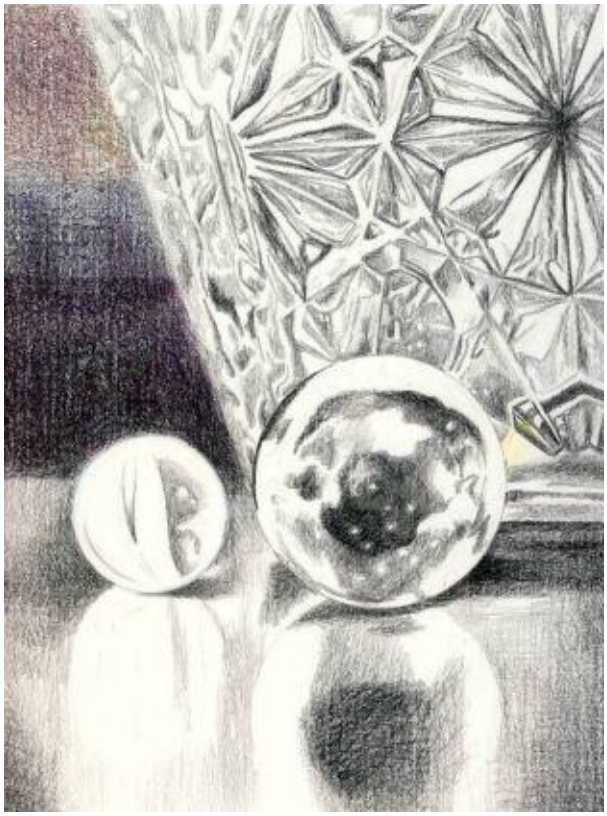
Basic Colors: indigo blue, black, dark green, cerulean blue, lilac, yellow ochre, true green, apple green, ultramarine and white. Touches of many other colors similar in value are also added.



Reference photo

Step 1: Make a detailed outline drawing. The easiest way to transfer this highly complex image onto paper is to print a picture matching the exact size of the drawing. Then, use a window's daylight to draw the outline. An opaque projector comes handy, too, if the picture must be enlarged and the lines redrawn for accuracy.

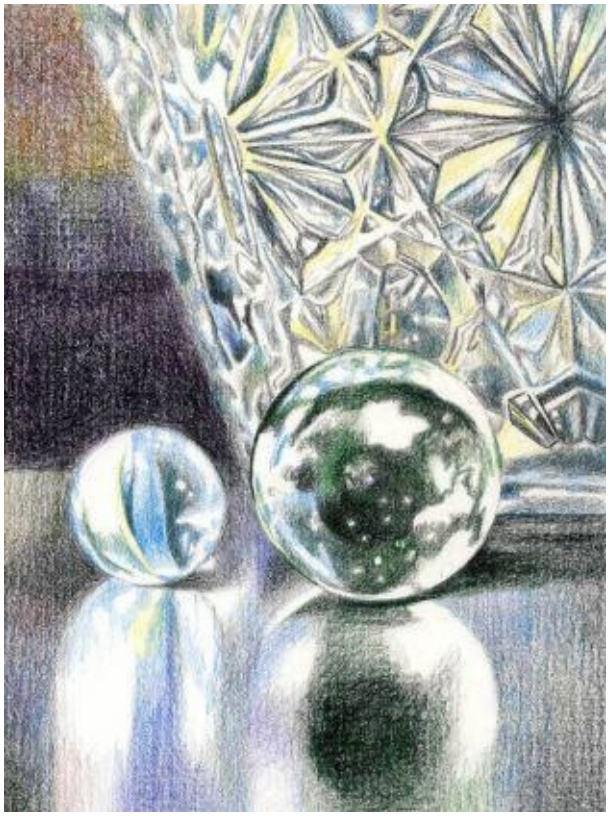
Use coins or other round objects to make circles for the marbles. Use the ruler to draw the lines of the vase.



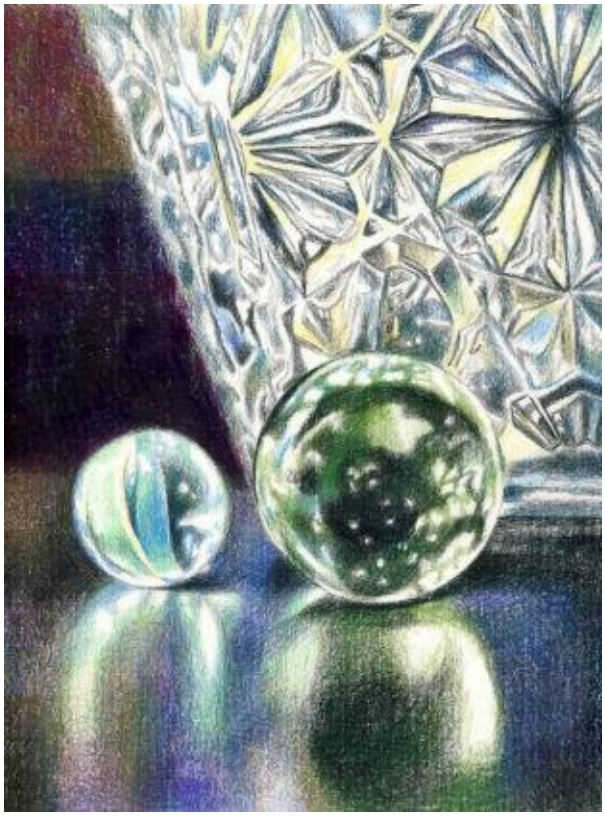
Step 2: I suggest you start drawings with the shadows (the darkest darks). Meticulously draw the entire image with varied pressure and sharp point of “black” pencil – the underpainting. It is the most important step in drawing glass, because it sets the stage for accurate representation of the forms. It’s helpful to draw from the grayscale reference photo only at this point.

Mark the highlights, painting around them with lighter pressure. Strive to keep the marbles round by carefully shading dark background behind them.

Burnish the surface with the mineral spirits and wait till it dries.



Step 3: You can introduce a variety of local colors into your picture by layering them over black underpainting. Apply “cerulean blue” and “dark green” in the vase, marbles and their reflections, while using a mix of “yellow ochre” and “cerulean blue” to cover the lighter areas in the vase. Add “Spanish orange” or “yellow ochre” in the yellowish reflections.



Step 4: It is optional to burnish the color surface with turpenoid now.

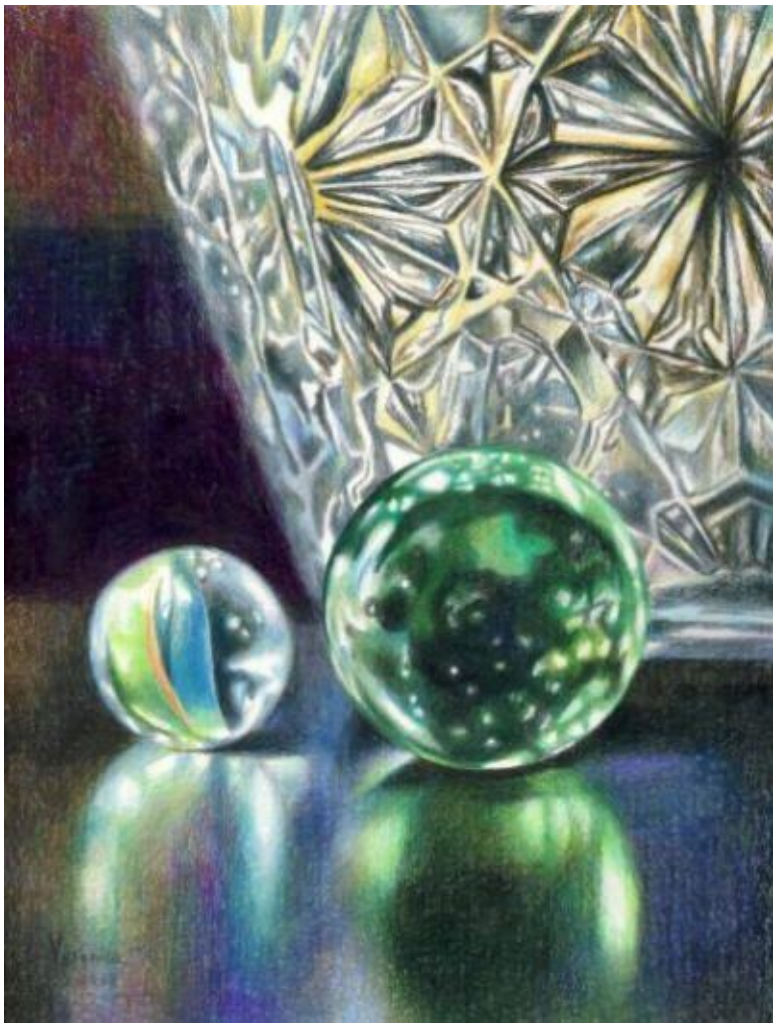
Add more of the same colors over the dried layer again. Use “ultramarine,” “lilac” and “apple green” in the marbles and their reflections.

Keep some edges of the vase blurry and soft, and with sharp pencil reinforce the lines closest to the center of interest.

Detail: This close-up of the crystal vase shows the multitude of colors required, and the amount of white spaces left out, to imitate the texture of crystal.

All colors are feathered over strong “black” lines and then over each other.

Step 5: In this final step, smooth the surface even more with a colorless blender and soften the edges with “white” around every highlight. Because it’s a glassy, shiny surface it must exhibit minimal texture and appear very smooth in both the marbles and the vase.



Still Life with Two Marbles · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Soft Textures

Step-by-Step Demonstration on Colored Paper: Cattail

I love this picture of a cattail. It is very peaceful and reminds me of a living creature sitting near water.

This demonstration is different from the previous ones because of the paper tone. Drawing on colored paper is fun and fairly quick. It is easier to separate between the values. The painting approach is also special, with darks and lights applied almost simultaneously.

Basic Colors: indigo blue, dark brown, ultramarine, dark green, yellow ochre, grass green, apple green, sienna brown, lilac, peach, light pink, powder blue or light cerulean blue, and white.

Step 1: Draw the outline over the mid-toned grayish paper. It’s good to experiment with paper’s color but pick a hue close to medium value to begin with.

Step 2: When drawing on a colored surface, paint from light to dark. With medium pencil pressure, lay in the lights with “white” on the right side of the cattail and add “yellow ochre” and “white” on its left. Add “white” to highlight the grass.

Step 3: Block in the background with a basic mix of “indigo blue,” “apple green” and “dark green.”

Draw the water to complete the finish.

Burnish the background with mineral spirits.

Step 4: Work on the center of interest—the cattail's body—adding the darks first with a combination of "ultramarine" and "dark brown."

Next, make a transition between the lights and the darks with "peach," "light pink" and "yellow ochre." Take care to layer colors in short, varied and curvy strokes, imitating the directions of fur growth.

Details of background color combinations & the cattail's furry textures.

Step 5: Finish up drawing the cattail by mixing and overlapping the same colors over previously applied layers. Reinforce “white” in the highlights to reestablish the lights. Add more variety with “apple green” and “true green” into the background and burnish it again, if needed.

Cattail · 5 x 7" (12 x 16 cm) · 2008

Smooth Textures

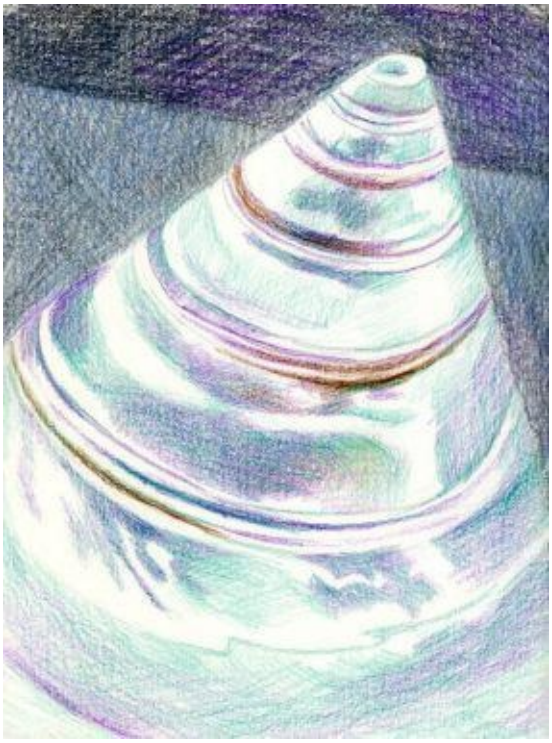
Step-by-Step Demonstration: Triangular Shell

Shells are attractive objects to draw. They have beautiful subdued colors and relatively easy shapes. It’s easy to draw an entire shell, or to make a close-up view of it, concentrating on its abstract surface design. This wonderful shell I own came from the deep end of the Indian Ocean.

Basic Colors: indigo blue, violet, ultramarine, Tuscan red, mulberry, lilac, powder blue or light cerulean blue, light pink, light aquamarine and white.

Step 1: Outline lightly the triangular shape with sharp point of graphite pencil or better yet with “light cerulean blue” (left).

It’s very helpful to either print a grayscale reference photo of the shell or make a black and white sketch of it to understand patterns of light and shade (right).



Step 2: Block in the background with a color combination of “Tuscan red” and “indigo blue.” Varying the background’s values, add other colors.

Relying heavily on the black-and-white reference photo, draw the dark patterns on the shell with purples and “ultramarine.”

Add “light cerulean blue,” “lilac,” and “light aquamarine” for middle tones in the shell, drawing carefully around the highlights.

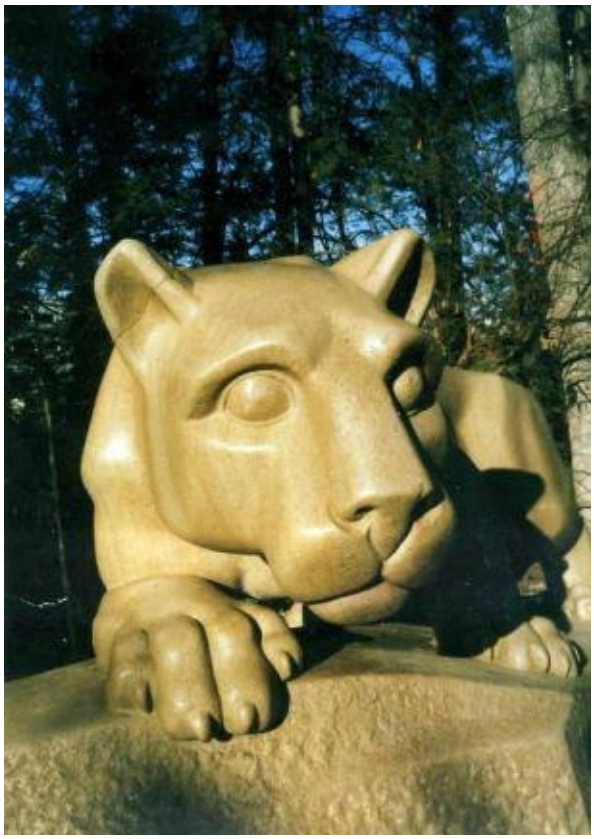
Avoid creating straight lines—pyramidal lines need to “hug” the shell and curve around it.

Use “light aquamarine” and “white” to burnish the surface around light areas. Burnish the background with turpentine.

Step 3: Reevaluate the drawing in terms of values and color. Stand back and look at it from the distance. Some areas will need to be darkened, while highlights should be softened. Reapply light colors across the surface or use “white” to subdue and unify previous layers in the shell. This is a very smooth plane that requires blending with colorless blender at the final stage.

Indian Shell · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Limestone Textures



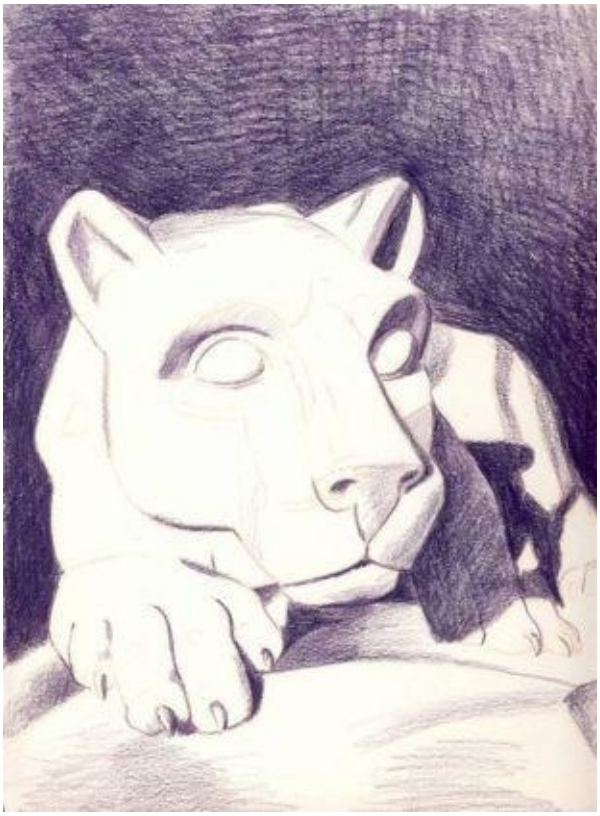
Step-by-Step Demonstration: Nittany Lion

Limestone textures are similar to metal surfaces in terms of their smoothness. Yet, the two textures are different in their reflection patterns. The limestone object is light, dull and relatively non-reflective as opposed to the metal object that is much darker, shinier and more reflective. Generally, shiny, reflective surfaces require more skill to create the illusion of volume on paper. Thus, this project is designed for the beginners while the next one targets more advanced students. Observe how the light turns the form in both demonstrations.

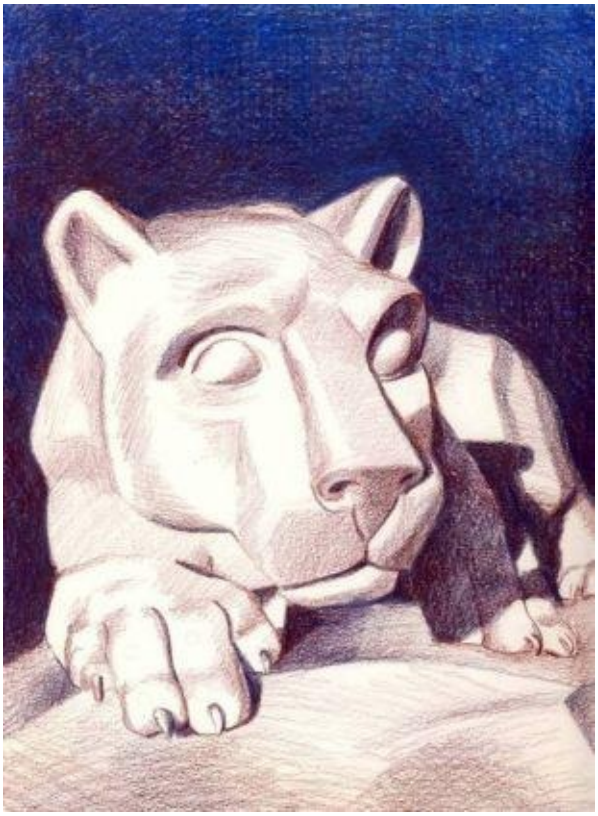
Basic Colors: black grape, Tuscan red, ultramarine, sienna brown, poppy red, French grey 50%, peach, beige, Spanish orange and white.

Step 1: Sketch the sculpture first, working on the accurate representation of the shapes. With a very light pencil pressure, transfer the outline onto the drawing paper with graphite or “cream” pencil.

I use light colored pencil. It will eventually blend with other colors unlike the graphite line that might become a lot darker and ruin the illusion of volume.

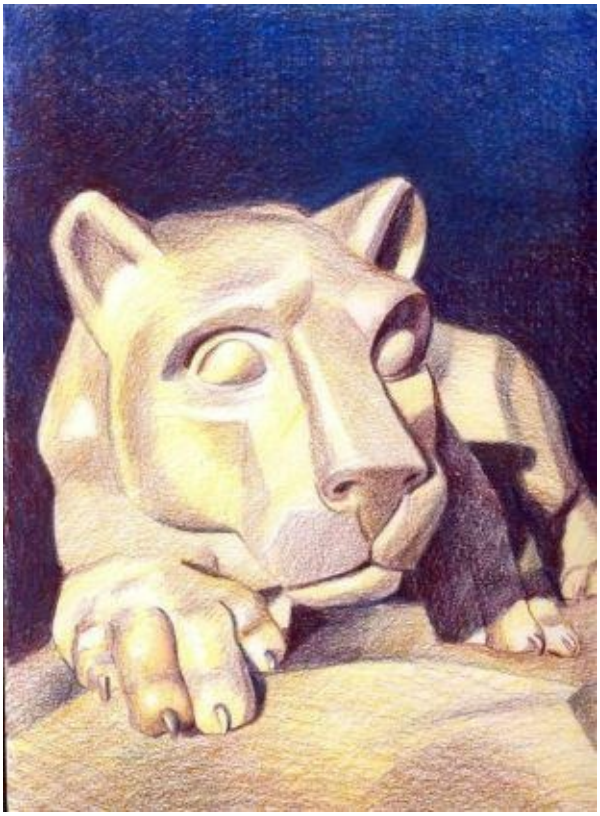


Step 2: With varied pencil pressure, block in the shadows with “black grape.” (I always draw from dark to light on white paper). It’s an important step to get the volume of the sculpture right. All other colors are layered over this underpainting. If it’s hard to see the shadows, print the grayscale version of the reference photo and work on this step with the black-and-white photo.

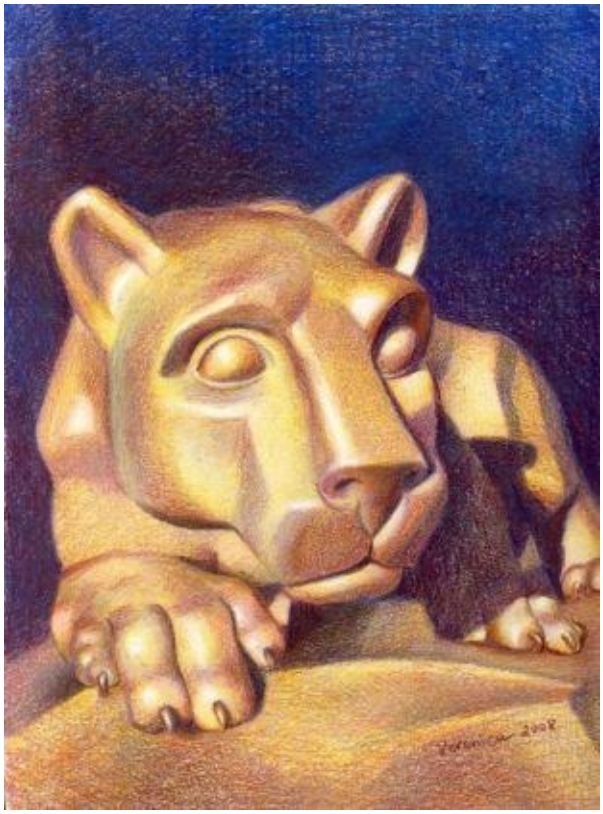


Step 3: With light pencil pressure, introduce the middle tones into the picture with a color combination of “Tuscan red” and “sienna brown”.

Block in the background with “ultramarine” and burnish it with the mineral spirits or turpenoid. Let it dry.



Step 4: Draw with yellows around the highlights in light, feathering strokes. Generally, limestone is a warm surface. So, let warm colors – “Spanish orange,” “peach” and “beige” spill over the mid-tones.



The Nittany Lion · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Step 5: The lion’s texture is the absence of it. To copy its smoothness I burnish the surface with colorless blender, “white” and “cream.” I also add “French grey 50%” in cool reflected light.

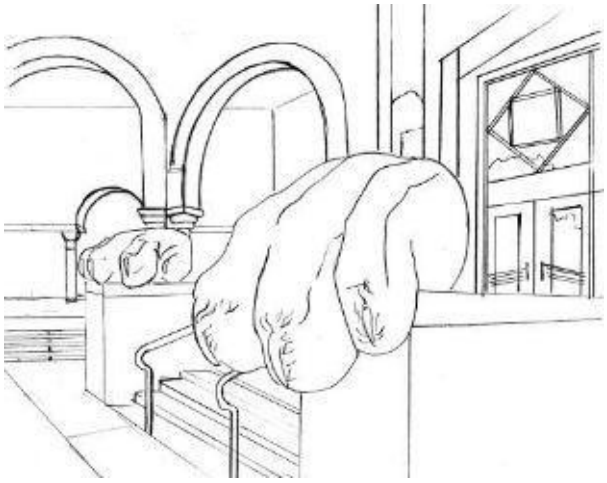
With sharp point of colored pencil reinforce a few details like the nostril, lip line, nails and ears.

Metal Surfaces

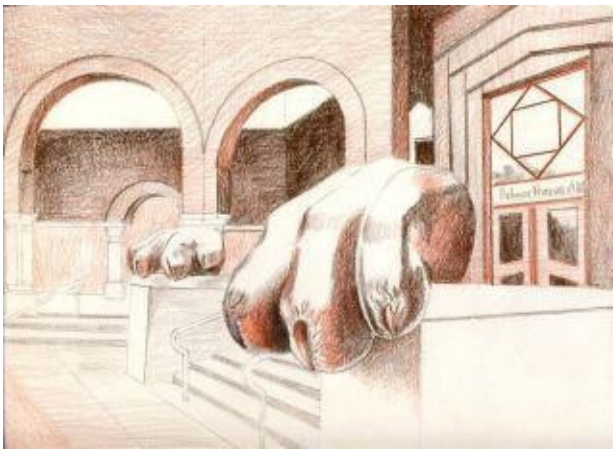
Step-by-Step Demonstration for Advanced Students: Paws

Painting this picture is a very time-consuming process because it’s a complex image in terms of geometry. But the paws are quite easy to draw. The big one can be drawn set against white background as a practice exercise for beginners.

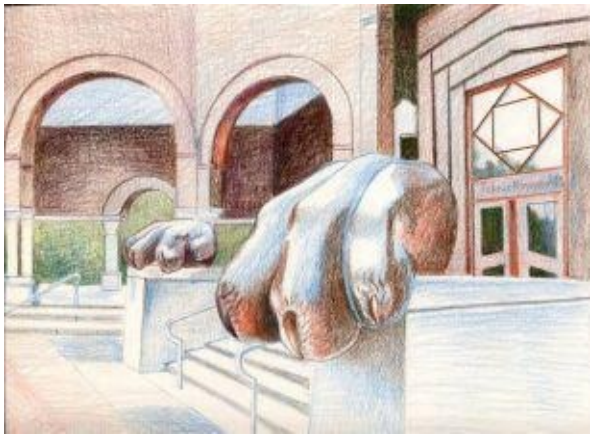
Basic Colors: dark purple, black cherry, dark brown, dark green, sienna brown, true blue, mulberry, poppy red, light cerulean blue, yellowed orange, cool grey 50%, warm grey 20% and white.



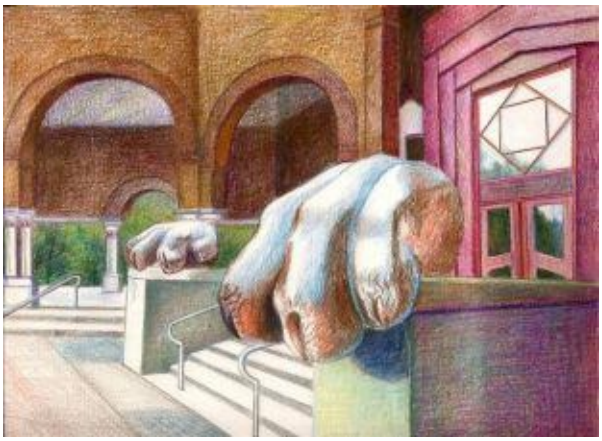
Step 1: Outline is the hardest step to accomplish, constructing this image. I use rulers to achieve geometric accuracy.



Step 2: Reestablish the lines with sharp point of “dark brown” pencil and the ruler. Start with deepest shadows and block in the darks with warm color combination of “dark brown” and “poppy red.”



Step 3: To cool off the metal surface add “true blue” in the reflected light of the paws and the background. I choose cool blues because this color gets reflected from surroundings and the sky.

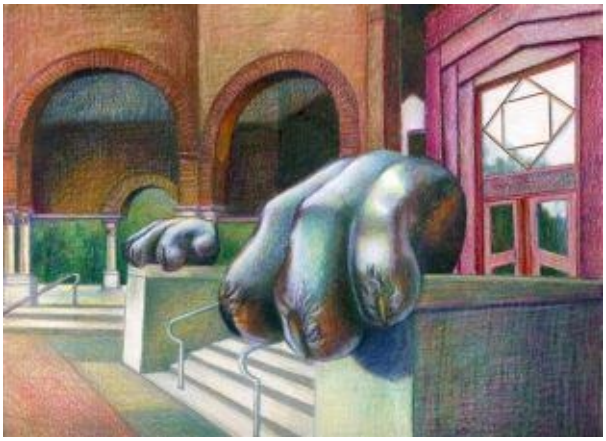


Step 4: Now is the fun part to layer on a variety of colors seen in the reference photo. I add cool “mulberry” hue in the doorway behind the paws.

I burnish the entire surface with a turpenoid in the darks and with light pencils and colorless blender around the highlights.

I add “poppy red” to paws and with a sharp point define a few details too, like nails and hairs. I imitate brick texture with random pencil strokes in the background.

I also completely burnish the paws with the colorless blender to give them this shiny metal look.



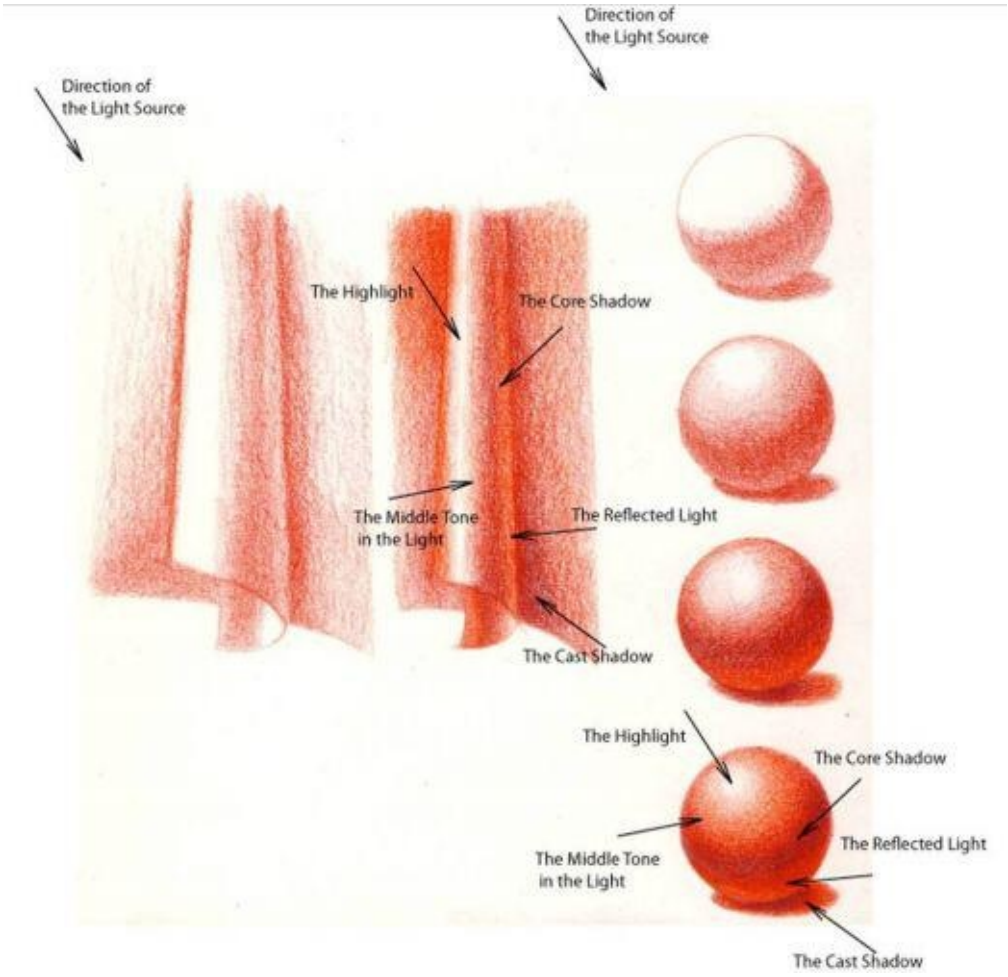
Nittany Lion Paws at the Palmer Museum of Art
9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Fabric Textures

There are several types of fabrics with various properties of textures and patterns: satins, cottons, velvets, leather, suede, polyester and so on. Some of them need burnishing like satin and others look best without it like linen.

In realistic depiction of any fabric, the idea is to look for the same core shadow and the reflected light seen in geometric objects of a sphere or cylinder. Only after clear understanding how light shapes the form of the fabric, pattern is layered over that form. This principle is illustrated in the picture below. Both the sphere and the fabric fold are drawn using the same rule of realistic depiction of volume, finding the core shadow, the reflected light and the highlight. The picture illustrates the progression of applying shadows in the sphere and the fabric just like in previous drawing demonstrations.

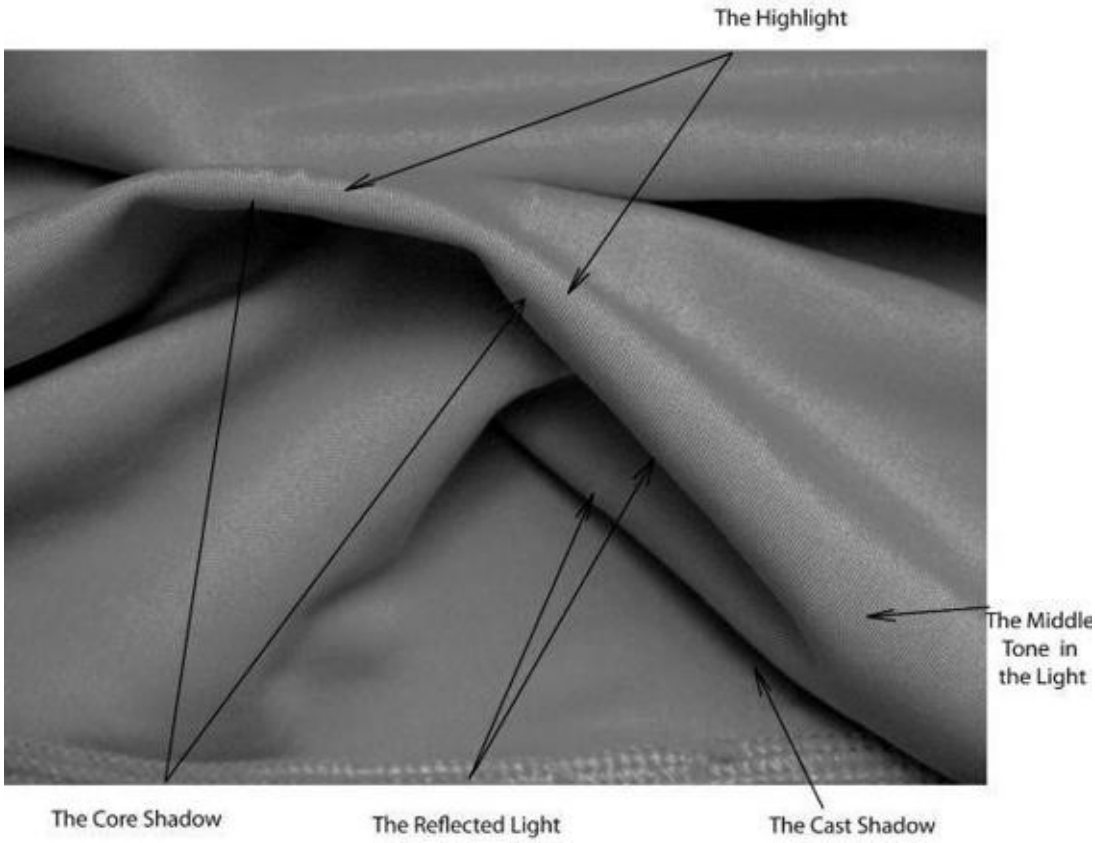
It’s important to remember that the folds are formed by the objects underneath the fabric (clothed arm or the tablecloth, for instance) and as a result, the material has different wrinkle patterns. That is why the artist needs to be aware of curves, angles and any other changes in directions of the underneath surfaces to depict wrinkled material realistically.


Direction of
the Light Source
Direction of
the Light Source
The Highlight
The Core Shadow
The Middle Tone
in the Light
The Reflected Light
The Cast Shadow
The Highlight
The Core Shadow
The Middle Tone
in the Light
The Reflected Light
The Cast Shadow

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Red Polyester Fabric

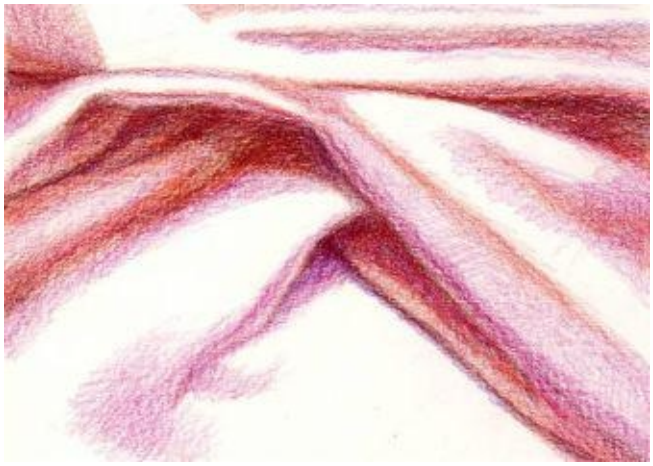
This is a classical fabric type with soft fluid folds and no pattern on it. It is easier to start drawing the fabric without distracting designs. The reference photo shows the color scheme and its grayscale version depicts analysis of light and shade. In theory, every fold has the same pattern of shadows (having the core shadow, the highlight and the reflected light) but it becomes challenging at times to see this pattern.

Also, the folds are fluid and need to be depicted blended and soft with some lines more definite and others dissolving into the fabric.

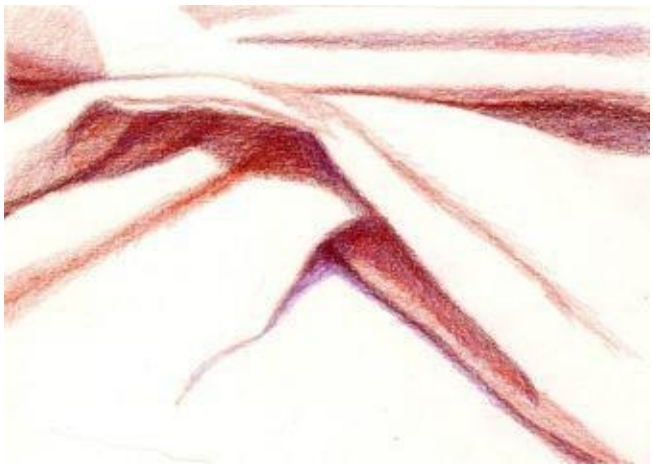


Basic Colors: dark purple, Tuscan red, crimson red, mulberry, poppy red, and orange.

Step 1: I make an outline with “poppy red.”



Step 2: I follow the same rule in drawing from dark to light. With medium pressure I apply the darkest shadows, using a combination of “crimson red” and “dark purple.”



Step 3: With heavy pressure I draw the core shadows with cool “mulberry.” With medium pressure I add the same color spilling over the edges. In this step I have just formed a rough layout of light and shade.

Step 4: I work on the middle tones with a color combination of “poppy red” and “orange.” Notice, the entire surface is covered with varied tone but the highlights are left rather transparent.

Step 5: More “orange” is applied to warm up the fabric and blend the differences between the lights and the darks. I bend the surface with either the colorless blender or a turpenoid to achieve nice, smooth finish.

Step 6: In the final step I apply the same colors from dark to light and burnish the surface again.

Step-by-Step Demonstration for Advanced Students: Patterned Fabric

This is a very simple drawing in copying the color, but a challenging one drawing the patterned outline. That’s why this demonstration is for more advanced students. To make a good outline observe how folds get formed and, as a result how patterns of flowers and leaves turn, following the curvature of these folds. Some leaves get cut off and become unequally curvy on the sides.

Basic Colors: white, black, cool grey 50%, light cerulean blue, yellow ochre, lemon yellow and white.

Step 1: It is crucial to make a good outline, repeating the shape of the folds with the floral pattern. Because the fabric is soft it creates concave shapes with flower pattern curving in and out. I must repeat those folded patterns accurately to achieve realism of the form. The easiest way to do so is to transfer the image with the projector.

With sharp point and medium pressure I reestablish the outline with “black.” I apply yellows over the yellow strip and add some “light cerulean blue.”

Step 2: I block in the darks with “black” only. It’s a rare occasion to use black hue as opposed to a color combination. I work on the core shadow and develop other soft shadows seen in the material.

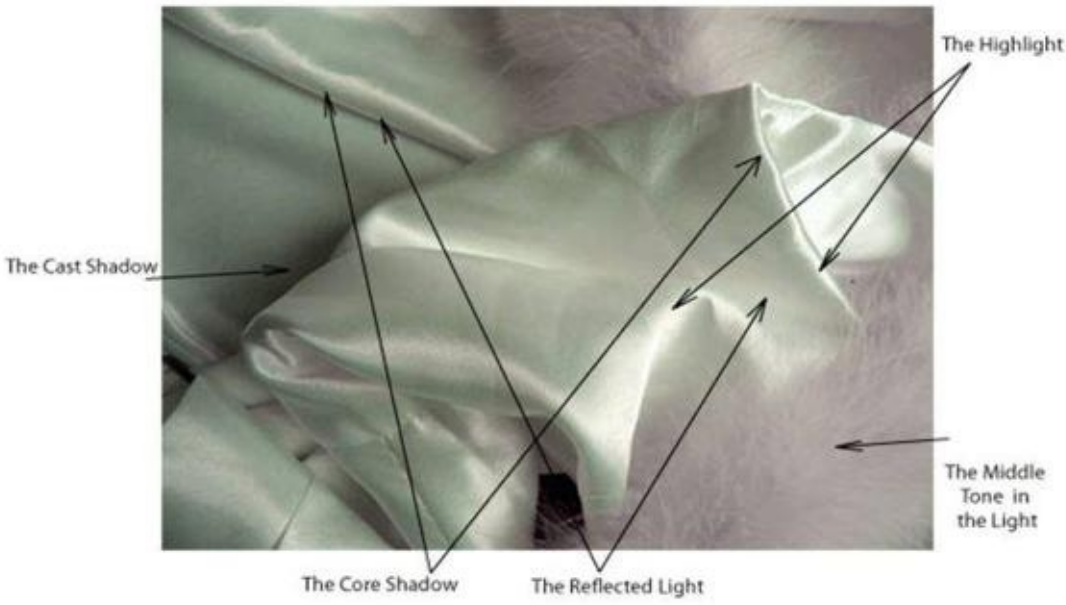
Flower Fabric · 5 x 7" (13 x 18 cm) · 2008

Step 3: I imitate the fabric's softness by adding more color in the middle tones with "cool grey 50%" and "light cerulean blue." At the same time I reinforce the core shadows with a touch of "violet." I apply colors with a very light pressure feathering them out to white.

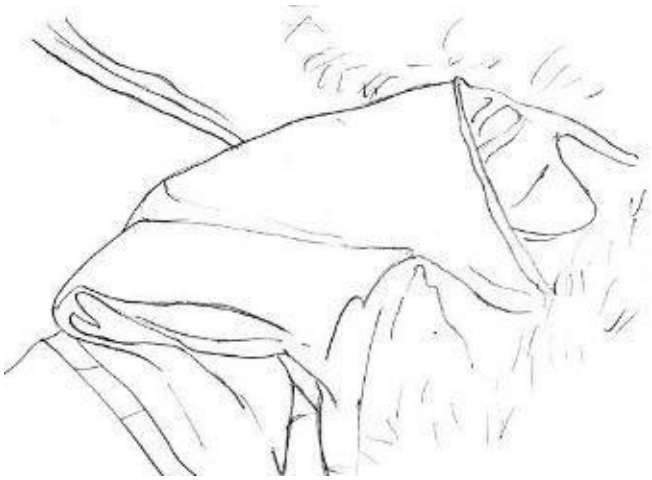
I reestablish (darken) the folds with previously used colors. I make sure to mark a few crisp edges in the pattern. I burnish the entire surface with the colorless blender to smooth the colors even more if necessary.

Step-by-Step Demonstration for Advanced Students: Satin

Drawing satin is rather complicated due to its elaborate folds, many highlights and illusive shadows. To achieve the realism of the form, I look for the core shadows and the reflected lights in this material. I find the satin fabric fascinating because despite its whiteness, this material reflects lots of colors. It is also wonderfully soft and sensual.



Basic Colors: black cherry or violet blue, lilac, true blue, cool grey 50%, light cerulean blue, light pink and white. Other similar colors can be easily added.



Step 1: Make a precise contour drawing of the folds, marking the highlights at the same time.

Step 2: This step becomes crucial in capturing the three-dimensional form. After careful study of the folds I copy its movement by darkening the core shadows and leaving the highlights white with “true blue” or other similar color.

Step 3: I go over the entire surface with “violet blue” to deepen the shadows and cool down the overall tone of the material. If there are too many light areas in the picture, they all compete and don’t give the complete visual illusion of the three-dimensional form. Thus, I leave only a few strongest lights and feather other lights out with light pencil pressure of “light cerulean blue” and “white.”

I allow the background folds to recede in space more by placing an even tone over the background with “lilac” or “violet blue.” Then, I burnish the surface with the colorless blender and “white.”

Step 4: I create softer transitions between the colors by burnishing the surface with colorless blender and then “white.” I feather out spaces around the light areas and draw a few curvy lines representing soft feathers in the right hand-corner

Satin · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Chapter Seven

Blue Flowers in Heart Pot · 18x12" (46 x 30 cm) · 2009

Drawing Flowers & Dews

"I hate flowers – I paint them because they are cheaper than models and they don't move!"-- Georgia O'Keeffe

Floral drawing is perhaps the most popular and enjoyable subject matter for beginning artists. But after mastering flower painting, some artists get bored with it and, like Georgia O'Keeffe, look for more challenging subject matter to portray.

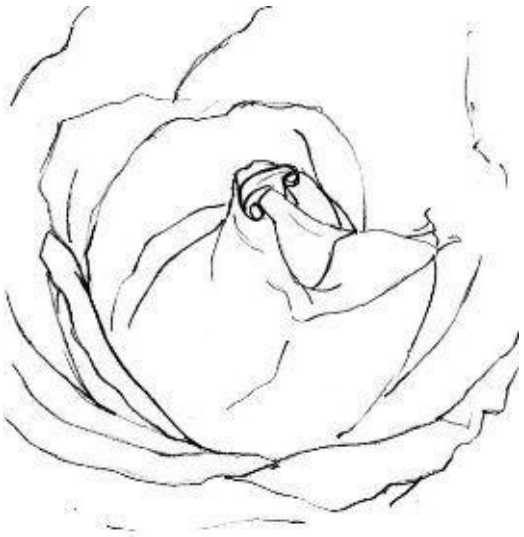
If you draw from a photo, like I often do (because I'm slow and flowers fade long before I finish my drawing), print the largest picture size possible to see all the details. I work with an 8" x 10" or 10" x 12"printout. You can also use the same printout to transfer the flower's contour onto the drawing paper with either a light table or a window light. I often make a free-hand drawing, because for me the experience and joy I gain from the process outweighs the time it takes to finish the outlines.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Pink Rose

This image of a flower is quite simple and relatively similar to a picture of satin in its softness and line fluidity. When photographing, I like to zoom in tight. This renders the rose abstract, focusing the eye on the beauty of light and design. I suggest you crop the picture, rather than drawing everything seen in the photograph. I always look for stronger contrasts and abundance of color in flowers. For beginners white flowers might be a challenge to depict because of their minimal, illusive differences in hues. I suggest you start out painting a colorful flower with a relatively strong pattern of light and shade.

Hint: To avoid smudging with your palm while painting light objects, place a piece of plain paper between your drawing and your hand. Also, brush any pencil flecks off the paper with a soft brush and tap a kneaded eraser lightly over the lines and highlights to lighten the darkening or smudged areas.

Basic Colors: crimson red, black cherry, poppy red, pink, lilac, peach, yellow ochre, light yellow, white, cream and powder blue.



Step 1: Make a contour drawing. Mark the highlights with the lightest graphite line possible or use “cream” pencil to avoid non-erasable dark marks. Keep the paper clean of any residue at all times.

Step 2: Begin layering in the deepest shadows of the rose's center by blocking them in with a color combination of "crimson red" and "black cherry" or "violet." Avoid smudging paper with your palm, dragging some color onto your lightest areas.

Step 3: With medium-to-light pressure work on middle tones – values that connect the darks with the highlights. Be liberal with color choices and add more of the hues I've listed. A combination of "lilac," "pink" and "peach" with a bit of "powder blue" always works well. Spill these colors over the darks to unify the generally cool tone.

Step 4: With light pressure add yellows in medium lights to warm up the surface. Burnish the entire image with a colorless blender first. It will smooth out the surface and enhance the colors. Then, continue burnishing with “white” or “cream” around the highlights and with “orange” or other similar color in the middle tones.

Pink Rose · 9 x 10" (23 x 25 cm) · 2008

Drawing Dews

Dews always fascinate people because of their transparency and subtle complexity. However, they are quite easy to paint. Just follow the steps illustrated in this picture.

Remember, dews repeat the colors of the surface they sit on. Their shape is either elongated or round. Here are the steps:

1. Make a circle or an oval shape for the dew with “cream” pencil.
2. Cast a shadow from it.
3. Color the cast shadow with relatively dark local hue of the flower.
4. Create a highlight on the opposite side of the cast shadow. Use gentle feathering strokes of light colors placed around the highlight.
5. Add more color variation around the dews and inside them. (I use Yellow here).
6. Blend the surface with a colorless blender.

Notice, both the white highlight and the reflected light are paper’s original color. If you draw on colored paper, the highlight has a color combination of “light yellow” or “cream” and “white” for the warm light and a color mix of “light blue” or “light lilac” and “white” for the cool light. “White” hue is always placed over the first color to enhance the surface.

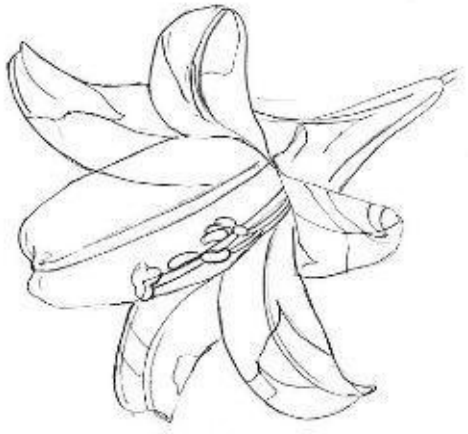
Hint: The dews must have the same color combination that the flower has, but are smoother and more transparent.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: White Lily

This demonstration focuses on the colors of the shadows observed in a white flower. The lily’s shadows turn the form with grayish blues and warm greens.

Basic Colors: black, dark green, indigo blue, ultramarine, violet blue, yellow ochre, apple green, true green, sienna brown, poppy red, light cerulean blue, white, and powder blue.

As usual, the grayscale picture informs you about the value changes in the flower and its background. Notice, the background is very dark in relation to the flower and most of the lily’s darks are the core shadows situated on the turning areas of each petal. Other shadows are formed by the leaves located behind the flower.



Step 1: Make an outline with “yellow ochre” or other similar in value colored pencil. Because of the lily’s whiteness any graphite line will become noticeable and will flatten the form.

Step 2: Block in the background darks around the flower with a color combination of “black,” “dark green” and “indigo blue.” Pay attention to various values: some areas are more transparent and others are relatively solid.

Step 3: With varied pressure, work on the lily by drawing all the shadows with “indigo blue.” After this step the flower should look three-dimensional.

Step 4: Burnish the entire surface with a turpenoid. Be careful not to drag any dark background color into the flower (clean the brush before softening the petals with the solvent).

Step 5: This is the fun step of actually coloring the flower. Work on mid-tones and highlights in the petals with light pencil pressure and the multidirectional strokes. Use “light cerulean blue,” “powder blue” and “apple green.”

Apply some “violet blue” or “ultramarine” to reinforce a few shadows in the petals.

Work on the center of the flower with red, brown and yellow. Outline a few lines there to get a crisp edge of the focal point.

White Lily · 8 x 8" (20 x 20 cm) · 2008

Step 6: Blend the background even more with another layer of previously used color combination. Add a bit of “poppy red” and “violet blue” here and there to bring more color variety into the background.

Draw random dots of the pollen with “sienna brown” and yellows. “Apple green” is a good transparent color to add lightly into the petals’ center.

Burnish the petals with “powder blue” and “white” or “light grey” and “white.” The highlights remain untouched, with the paper’s original white surface showing through.

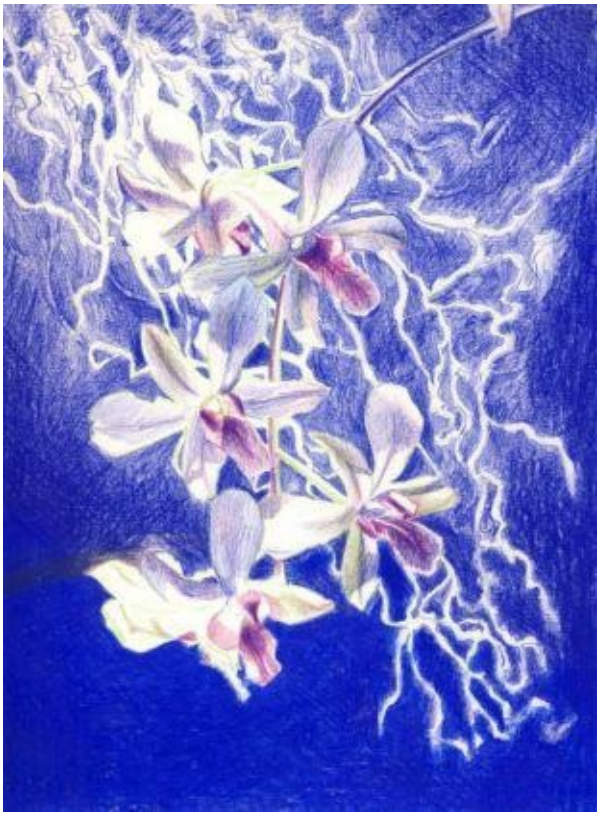
Step-by-Step Demonstration for Advanced Students: Flying Orchids

This demonstration also has white flowers, with strong patterns of light and dark. Although the general outline of each orchid is not very difficult to repeat in the drawing, the complex background and number of flowers make it a more challenging and time-consuming process for beginners.

Basic Colors: dark purple, violet blue, dark green, grass green, mulberry, crimson red, ultramarine, clay rose beige sienna, yellow ochre, apple green, pale sage, white and powder blue.

Step 1: Create an outline with light colored pencil. I choose “apple green” because there is a lot of this color in the picture and it will blend with the rest of the hues later on.

Step 2: Draw the shadows in the orchids with a color combination of “mulberry” and “apple green.” With a sharp point, work on each flower’s center with “mulberry” and “dark purple.”



Step 3: Block in the background with “violet blue,” drawing around the randomly placed curving plant lines.

The bottom part of the drawing shows the blended area with a turpenoid. The middle and upper areas of the background have no blending done. I don’t like the solidity of color in the blended area, and leave the rest of it solvent-free.

Step 4: Continue working on the background by adding more dark colors. I use “dark green” and “ultramarine.” Outline the petals with these colors if the start loosing shape and place value right next to the lines to blend those more with the background.

Color the curving shapes with “clay rose” and “beige sienna,” leaving only a few areas white. Add other green colors there at random.

Step 5: Color the petals carefully, observing the value differences in the grayscale picture. There are only a few pure whites in the leaves. The rest of them have light to medium dark tones. Closely examine which petals are more in shade than the others. Try using blues and greens to describe the middle tones. They yield pleasantly mixed hues over the shadows.

Step 6: Reestablish crisp edges in the orchids' centers and make minor adjustments in values. Blend the petals with a colorless blender and "white" if necessary.

Flying Orchids · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Water Lily

This demonstration develops a better understanding of subtlety, requiring the application of a variety of light pastel colors in a flower with no strong patterns of light and shade in its petals.

Basic Colors: indigo blue, dark purple, violet, dark green, grass green, apple green, olive green, lime green, crimson red, mulberry, poppy red, light peach, peach, light cerulean blue, pink, Parma violet, lilac, peach, Spanish orange, canary yellow, cream, powder blue and white.

The grayscale version of the picture illustrates how light in value the petals are in relation to the dark background.

Step 1: It is best to work on the outline drawing with graphite on a sketch paper first, determining the best composition and the accuracy of shapes.

Transfer the final outline onto heavy smooth paper with a light colored pencil like “lilac.”

Step 2: With varied pressure of “indigo blue,” work on the background and the blossom. Touch the darkest petals with it.

Draw the random texture of the lily pad with the same pencil but use heavier pressure. Notice, the left background corner is a lot darker than the rest of this area.

Step 3: Add both cool and warm greens into the background and the blossom. Restate the pattern texture of the lily pad with “dark green” and “indigo blue” if needed.

Step 4: Introduce violets and lilacs into the petals with medium pencil pressure. These are the darkest areas in the flower and lighter pencils will be applied on top. A few lines need to be solid and outlined, both in the center of the petal and its edge.

Step 5: Work on the center of interest – the flower's red filaments and anthers. Use a combination of "mulberry" and "crimson red" to define the form and use "dark purple" to outline a few major filaments.

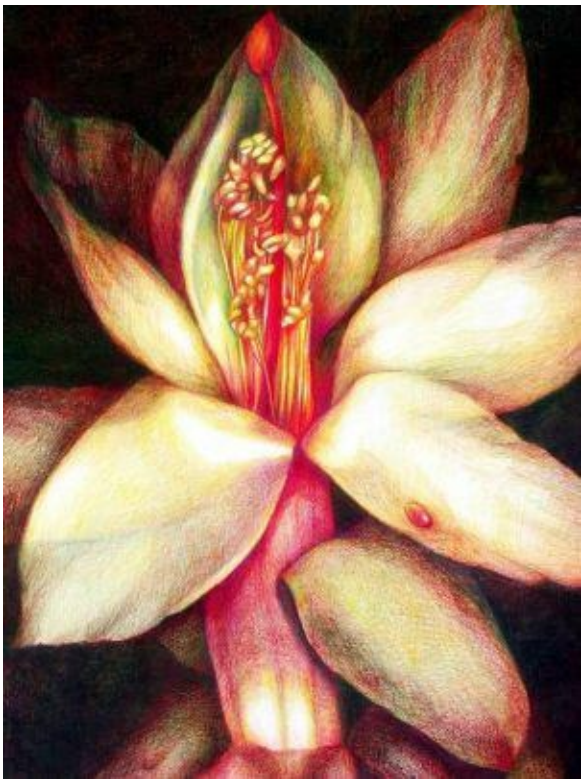
Add yellows at the bottom of the center and draw the anthers with "light cerulean blue" and "lilac."

Step 6: With light pencil pressure and a sharp point draw the light side of each petal with pinks, light blues and lavenders. Keep looking at the black-and-white photo to see relative values.

Blend all petals with a colorless blender and “cream” or “white.” This detail shows a variety of light colors applied in layers.

Water Lily · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

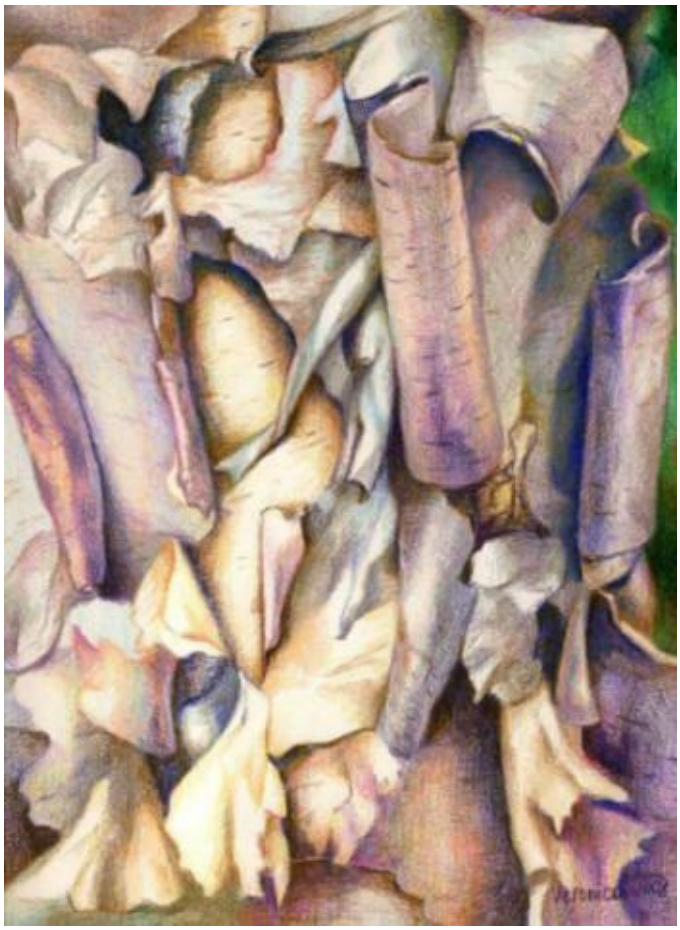
Examples of Flowers



White Flower · 18 x 24" (46 x 61cm) · 2006 · Private collection

Pink Lily · 12 x 14" (30 x 36 cm) · 2007 · Private collection

Chapter Eight



Birch · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Drawing Trees & Leaves

"Every day I am more convinced that people who do not first wrestle with nature never succeed." -- Vincent Van Gogh

I'm fascinated by the diverse and beautiful shapes of trees. The first plants to be worshipped by mankind, trees of great lifespan emerged as symbols of strength and eternity. The Tree of Life, the Tree of Knowledge, and the Bo Tree are the oldest examples of spiritual plants in recorded history. I see a strong connection between our species and the everlasting tree that alternately represents birth and death, happiness and sorrow, good and evil. For me, drawing trees involves mythological and spiritual components. For beginning artists, the drawing of a tree is primarily about getting the shape right, which is itself valid and necessary job to accomplish.

You will definitely succeed in drawing trees if you can follow the simple observational tips listed below with consistency in your creative process:

1. The key to drawing a tree is to see its basic shape. Sketch trees outdoors and simplify each one to a circle, triangle, or oval. Always study the chosen subject closely, making sketches from life to be comfortable

drawing it from memory or photo later.

2. Draw from general to specific by making a line of the tree trunk and an outline of its foliage. With light strokes develop values gradually from dark to light or vise versa. Finish the drawing by outlining a few leaves and branches to establish the focal point.

3. Both branches and trunk appear wider at the bottom and narrower at the top.

4. Don’t “cut off” the branches at the top of the tree. Rather, make the branches thinner and finer as they extend outward, eventually fading them into foliage.

5. Keep the lines curving rather than straight. There is little linearity in nature!

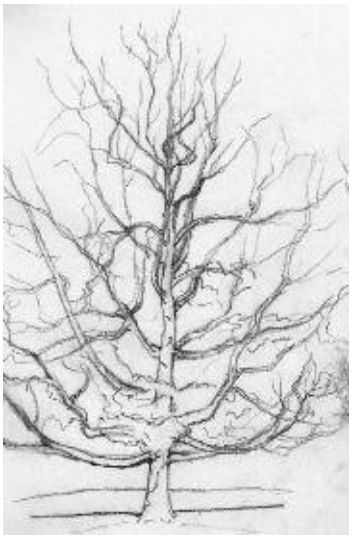
6. When drawing, vary values, pressure, and direction of pencil strokes.

7. Practice!

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Tree in Graphite

It is better to start with a study in graphite before moving to the color to see structure and values and not get intimidated by the amount of information facing the artist.

Materials: 8” x 10” drawing pad, 3B-5B graphite pencils, eraser.



Step 1: Sketch basic shape of a tree with light outlines to define the composition: make a few oval strokes in the center and place the as-yet imaginary tree inside of the oval. Then, draw the tree trunk and large brunches following the direction of their growth. Make sure to put all basic information down. Does the tree look squished? Uneven? Falling off the page? Too thick or/ and with cut off branches?

Step 2: Thinking in tonal gradations, look for darkest areas in the tree and block them in with large cross-hatching strokes. Do not worry about details! Keeping the pencil sharp, define darkest branches with harder lines and small brunches with lighter lines. Overlapping foliage and branches' curvature is a key to depicting texture variation and the complexity of the tree.

Step 3: Thinking of the focal point, add finishing touches: details in the foliage and darker shadows in the trunk. Use both cross-hatching and descriptive lines to define shape and create a range of values.

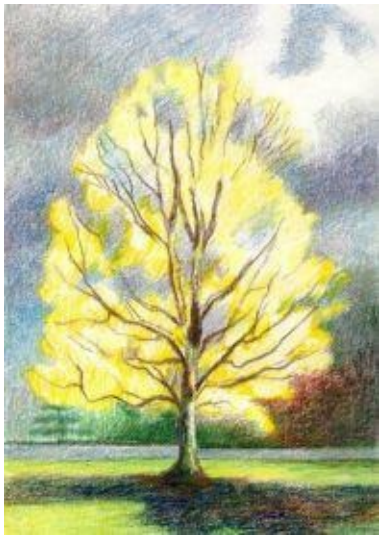
Step-by-Step Demonstration: Tree in Color

Basic Colors: indigo blue, dark green, Tuscan red or black cherry, dark brown, apple green, true blue, Spanish orange, lemon yellow and jade green.

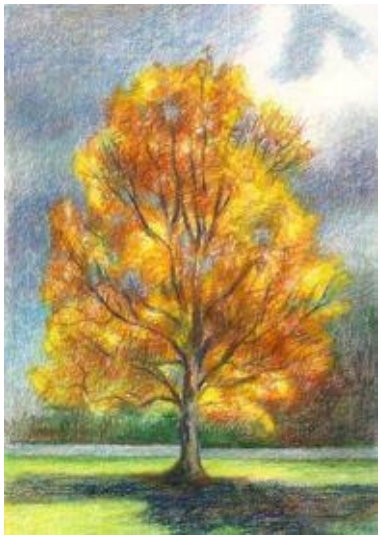
Step 1: With light pressure of a 2HB pencil, sketch the outline of the trunk and foliage. Avoid erasing that puts unnecessary grease onto paper.

Step 2: Block in the darks in the background and the tree trunk. Leave the highlights uncolored, allowing white paper to show through. Try adding a few golden colors in the contour to prevent accidentally coloring over your outline while drawing the sky.

Step 3: Finish up the sky with different shades of blue. Draw the grassy area around the tree with its shadow. There is an option here to either smooth out the surface with a solvent or leave it sketch-like.



Step 4: Layer more yellows and reds with a touch of green and brown into the foliage. Draw over a few branches with reds and browns to create an illusion of hidden branches.

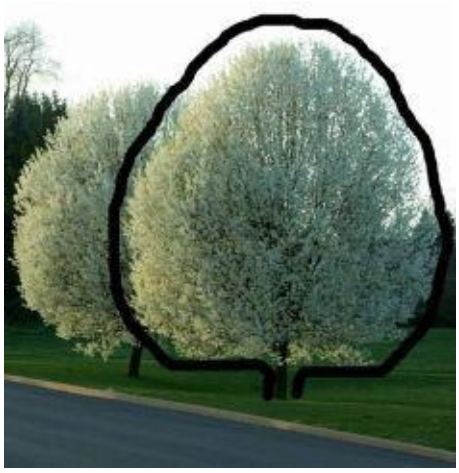


Golden Tree · 5 x 7" (13 x 18 cm) · 2007

Step 5: Reevaluate the values by stepping back from the picture. I darkened my background and added a few crisp lines in the branches. Burnish the background if needed.

Basic Tree Shapes

It is important to see basic tree shapes to filter through overwhelming amount of information.



Oval

Dome

Triangle

Circle

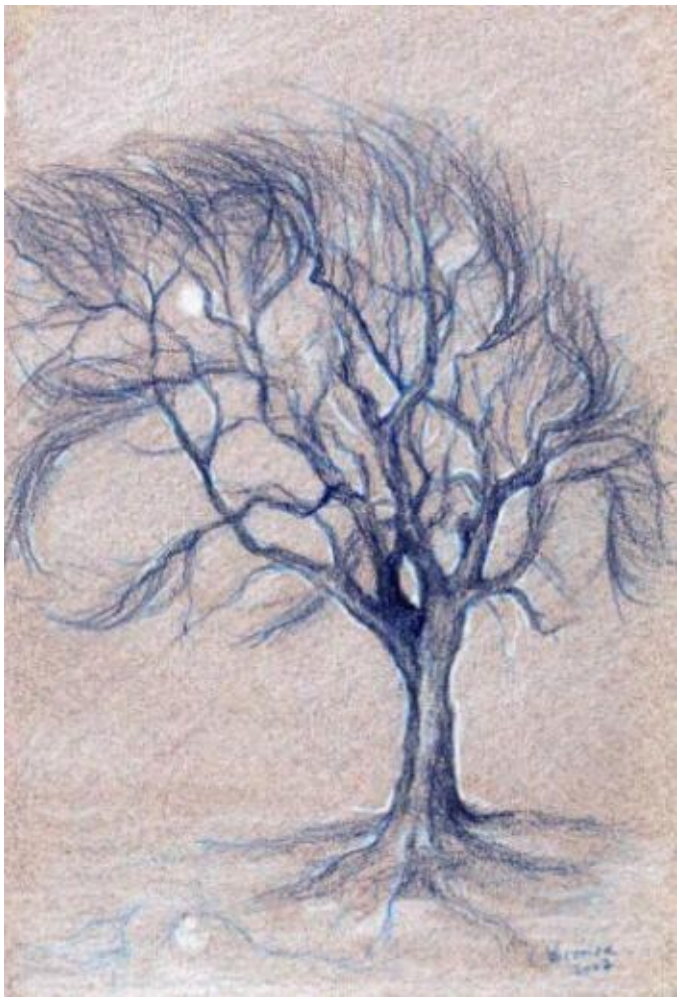
Sketching Trees in Graphite

Take out the spiral sketch pad and spend 10 to 15 min. sketching each tree outdoors. Try to capture tree's shape, movement, texture, and light conditions in shading.

Below are the tonal sketches of trees. The background is defined with light directional strokes, while a few linear accents add definition to the foreground.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Blue Tree

Basic colors & Materials: neutral toned color paper, 2HB pencil, white and indigo blue.



Blue Tree with the Moon · 5 x 7" (13 x 18 cm) · 2007
Private collection

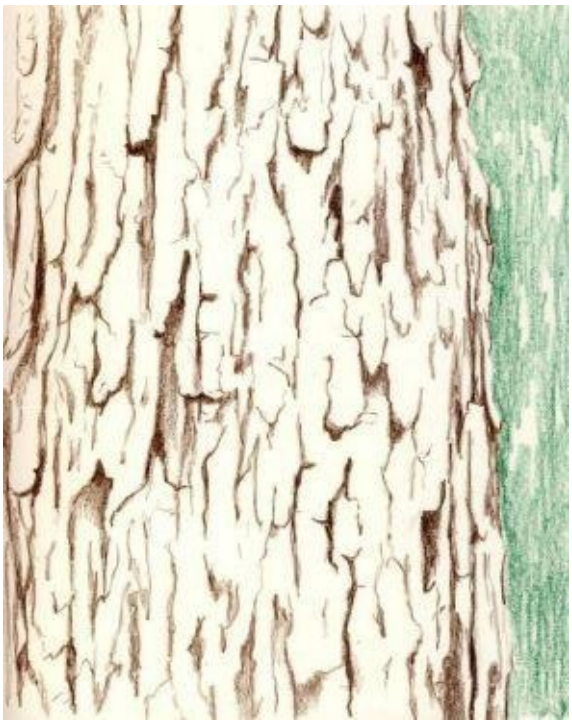
I drew this tree from my memory relying on my previous observations and sketches of the trees. I wanted to convey calm solitude through color and symbolic use of the moon:

- Identify basic tree shape by contouring the foliage with light strokes of 2HB pencil. Develop compositional balance by having enough space around the tree both in the sky and the ground.
- Depending on the mood you wish to convey, pick either warm or cool color scheme. I use cool blues.
- In this drawing I use only two pencils. Everything light is highlighted

with “white” and the darkest values are drawn with “indigo blue.” Middle values remain free of any pencil color to let the paper’s original tone show through. Such approach to drawing on colored paper makes the process quick.

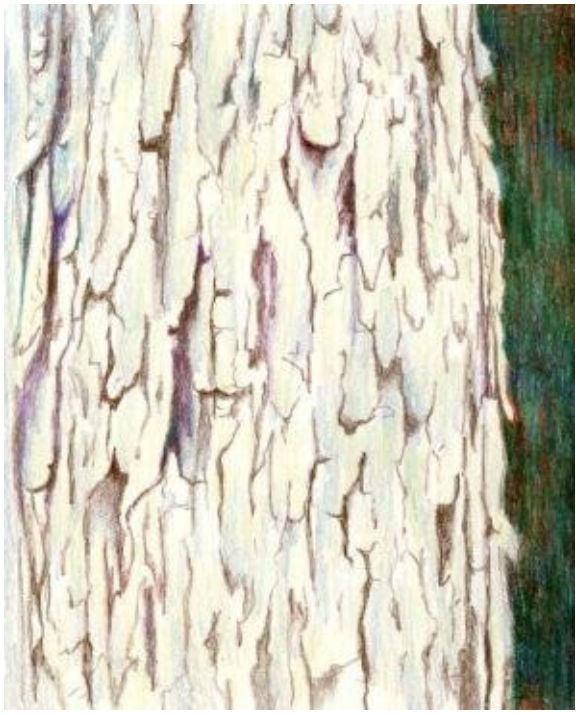
Step-by-Step Demonstration: Tree Bark

Basic Colors: black, dark brown, black grape, sienna brown, true blue, aquamarine, true green, light aqua, light cerulean blue, jade green and white.



Step 1: Create an outline. This is a tough part. It is very time-consuming and requires a lot of patience to make the right contour drawing. By examining the black-and-white photo, you can see the bark has a very even tone that is difficult to render in an interesting way on paper.

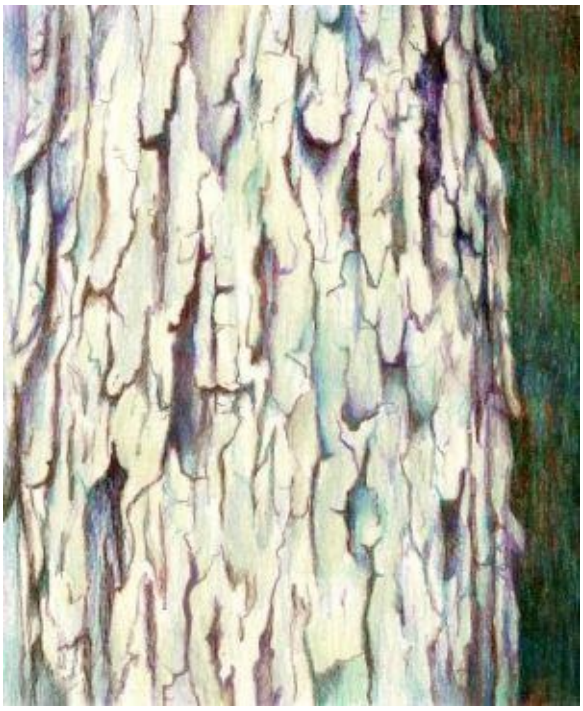
I start drawing the bark with “dark brown” filling in the darkest darks, simplifying the shapes and layering less information that I see in my picture. Depending on the light conditions the bark might have different color and other dark pencils can be used, like a color combination of “Tuscan red” and “black.”



Step 2: In this step, build color and texture. Block in the background color with greens and reds (the complement of green). Burnish the surface with a turpenoid in the background.

Add “jade green” with blues in the lightest areas of the tree. This color combination cools the surface down since the overall tone of the bark is cool.

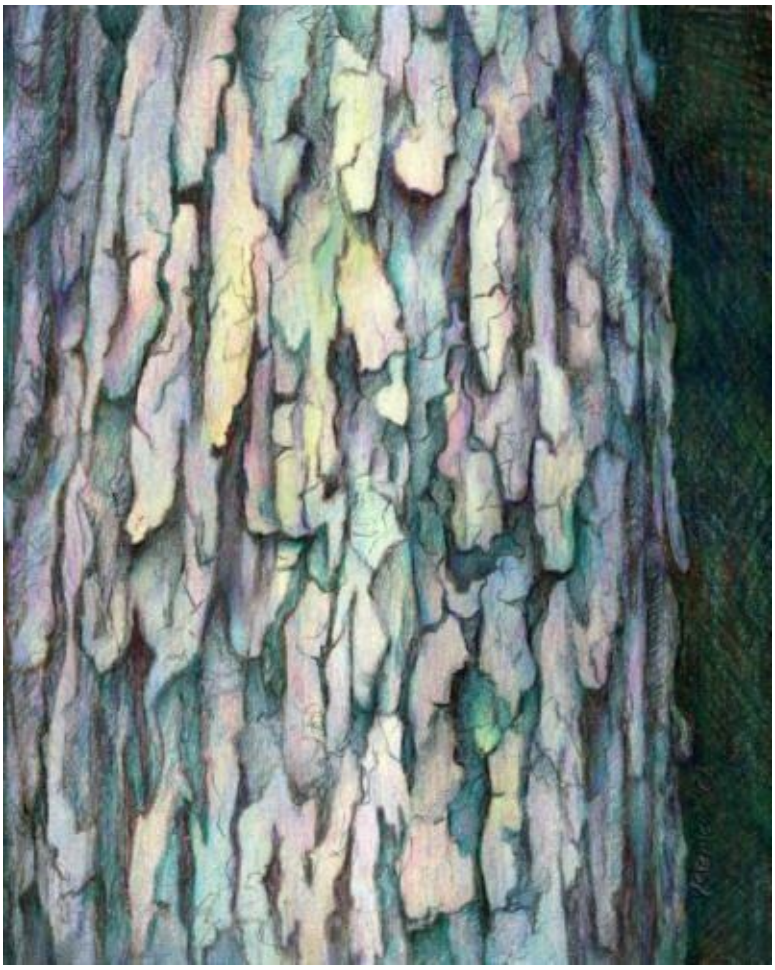
Reestablish a few shadows with “black.”



Step 3: After establishing the basic shadows and curvy lines in previous steps, work on details:

Add additional cooler greens over the entire surface to make it look darker.

Darken the background once again with another layer of “black.” Reestablish the bark’s pattern with sharp pencils and add more of the same colors into the shadows. Touches of other light colors are used to add variation in hues.

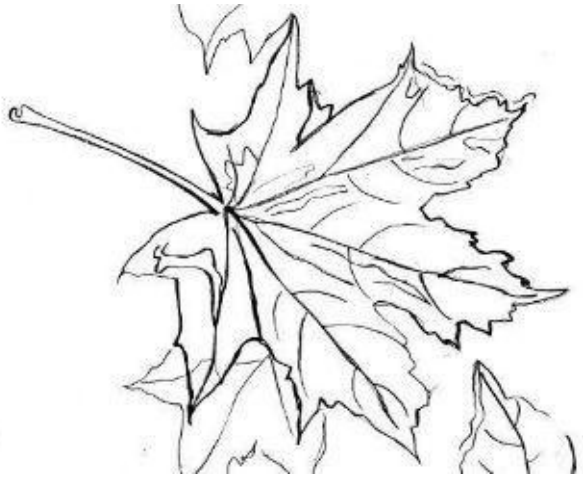


Green Bark · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Leaf

Fall is a wonderful season with its changing colors and crisp, cooling air. I took this picture back home in Russia, captivated with the leaf’s vivid hues and shiny surfaces. I eliminated the background on purpose to make this project more reasonable to draw for beginners.

Basic Colors: dark purple, ultramarine, black grape, sienna brown, dark green, olive green, apple green, crimson red, process red, yellowed orange, canary yellow, poppy red, muted turquoise and white.



Step 1: Sketch an outline drawing either with a light graphite line or colored pencil lines.

Step 2: Drawing from dark to light, layer deep reds, browns and “indigo blue.” With light pencil pressure I work on areas around the highlights with the same color combination.

Outline a few edges with “crimson red” for crispness.

Step 3: This is the fun part—developing color! Throw in as much color in as you see in the picture. Add greens and yellows to the leaf to warm up the tone.

I drop a cool shadow under the leaf with a color combination of “ultramarine” and “dark purple.”

I draw the leaves in the background.

Step 4: Burnish lighter areas in circles with a colorless blender to even out pencil marks, especially around the highlights. Consider not blending the leaf with turpenoid to maintain an appropriate, slightly uneven texture.

Outline the veins with “crimson red” and “dark brown” and draw a few varied dots to imitate the natural texture more completely.

Hint: Notice the thin, white lines of a few veins—these were previously impressed onto the drawing. To make these impressions, place tracing paper over the outline drawing and with a sharp pencil point, or even a pen, draw lines in required places. When coloring (or rubbing the surface) later on, these lines remain white.

Fall Leaf · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Fading Beauty · 18 x 24" (46 x 61 cm) · 2002 · Private collection

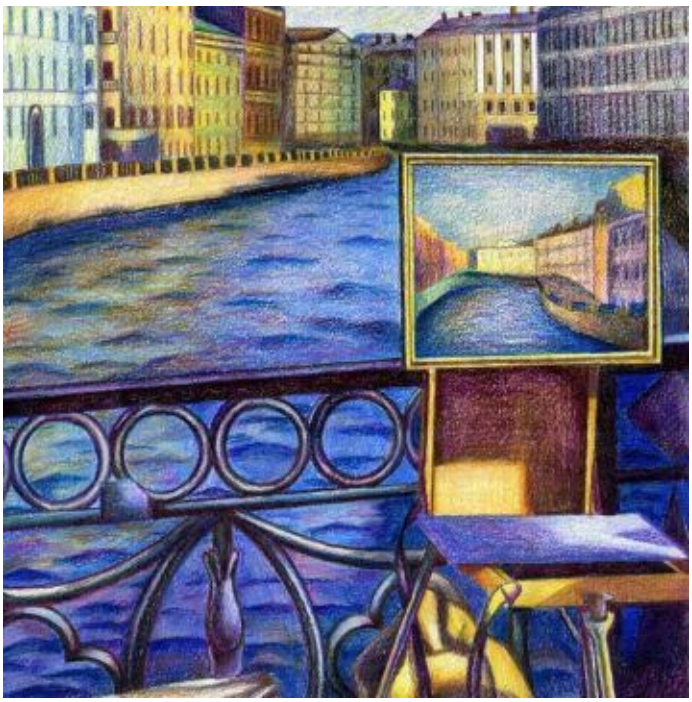
Chapter Nine

Evening Sky · 5 x 8" (13 x 20 cm) · 2008

Drawing Landscape & Sky

"…Looking at stars always makes me dream, as I dream over the black dots representing towns and villages on a map." -- Vincent Van Gogh

All great artists make studies from nature—even if they are not landscape painters. Nature is a multifaceted, constantly evolving supra-organism, teeming with life. It is the finest "model" available for artists to record their observations. Nothing and nobody can teach you how to draw if you don't make it a habit to sketch from nature.



Here are a few helpful tips on painting outdoors:

- Make sure there is a single center of interest in your landscape. The focal point should have crisp edges, contrast and maximum detail (a barn, tree, man, car, etc).
- Be selective about painting details, especially if they visually distract from the focal point. Provide suggestions of background objects instead.
- Keep some areas plain, especially in the distance where the viewer loses focus. Depict blurred shapes with soft, cool, low-intensity colors.
- Repeat colors, textures and shapes in the entire drawing for unity.
- Enjoy the creative process!

Painting the Sky

The sky is part of any landscape, and the sky you paint should enhance your landscape. But many students are intimidated at the prospect of depicting the sky. Clouds are undefined and ever-changing, and they regularly disappear altogether. Russian 19th century marine painter Ivan Aivasovsky depicted vast seascapes of Crimea and Italy. He painted pageant canvases filled with light and atmosphere. Aivasovsky always began his picture by painting the sky in one sitting–even when working on a large-scale work–to capture its essence and his emotional response to it. Sometimes Aivasovsky even passed out in his studio, working on his skies from down to dusk. I don't think all artists need to pass out studying the clouds, but it's a good lesson to consider the kind of determination that is employed to achieve great results.

Clouds are no hardship to draw after close observation, and quick studies of their outlined form and color. In fact, beautiful clouds are an exciting subject to paint, conveying very special moods and atmosphere. A whole painting can revolve around the natural magnificence of a cloud. The dramatic cloud formations of storms or sunsets always attract artists as powerful expressions of nature's command. Light, puffy clouds floating in a deep blue sky evoke happiness. Even the misty, grey clouds of a snowy or rainy day can illustrate calm and peaceful feelings. The skies often have a mix of different cloud types —cumulus, stratus and cirrus. They also have a variety of colors besides the obvious grey. Study them closely to see tints of pink, cream, ochre and blue in the whites of the clouds, and violets, greens, reds and so on in the clouds' shadows. With light pressure you can add those tints over the grays in your pictures to create beautiful hues. Now let's look at different cloud shapes and learn to record those on paper.

Understanding Cloud Shapes

Sunset clouds create dramatic contrast between the light of the sun and the darkness of the sky. Trees and buildings appear silhouetted against the strong backlighting. It’s easy to “overdo” the intensity of sunset hues on paper. I try to keep colors luminous, transparent and subtle to achieve realism when painting the sky.

The sky is the source of the light, thus the artist must determine the position of the sun and work on values consistently, despite their quick changes happening during the outdoor painting.

In this picture that I took in Rome, the sky light is warm in its color temperature. The same tints of warm yellow would be used to draw the sunset clouds. This yellowish line in the sky contrasts with cooler, grayer and darker hues of the upper clouds and the cool silhouette of buildings and trees in the Italian landscape.

The drama of the half-hidden sun peeking through the cloud after rain looks very attractive to paint. The top and bottom contour of the cloud is well defined and its outline should be represented faithfully on paper. The top outline itself is yellowish but should be drawn around with maximum precision in a relatively dark color combination of grays, yellows and browns.

At the same time it’s important not to create unnaturally intense contrast with the sharp edge of the cloud.

This sky is all about capturing the color and visual distinction between cool blue and warm orange. The cloud edges should stay soft, and feathering strokes are the best bet for drawing this picture. I would work from light to dark here because it’s vital to establish soft transitions between values and colors. The center of the sky would have more yellow in it while the lower part would have more red.

These blue sunset clouds are perfect illustration of the linear and aerial perspective in a sky. Though varied in size, they are all about the same color value and are even similar in their form, appearing almost symmetrical. They look smaller, flatter and closer together in the distance, with less distinct color gradations and intensity. To capture this illusion, draw larger clouds in the upper sky and gradually reducing the size of the clouds close to the horizon line. Also, those closest to the viewer should display more clearly-defined edges.

These are low cumulus clouds most often seen during on a bright afternoon.

You need to record the outline of the picture’s dominant clouds with reference to their respective size. The tops of the clouds reflect lots of light (highlights), while the bottom parts are in softer gray-blue (shadows). Block in the darker, lower areas of the clouds with grayish colors; draw with sky blues around the crisp, light edges. White highlights require a tint of warm yellow (not lemon yellow) to show that the sky is the source of light.

The lit edge of a cloud has a crisp edge, while the clouds' shadows are diffused. The contrast you create on paper between the blue sky and the white cloud edge gives the illusion of volume in the cloud. However, the warm blue sky should not be over-saturated with color, as it must remain lighter in value than the landscape below it.

In this photo, massive rain clouds move across the sky. Each one looks different, and they all display random crags. These clouds are the most difficult to paint because of their diversity and very similar gradations in value. Moreover, they don't have the highlights often found atop other clouds. Compositional lines in clouds guide the viewer towards the horizon line. Again, you must determine the source of light. The clouds appear lighter close to the horizon line and darker away from it. Following the rules of perspective, they weaken in color intensity with distance. When painting, try to locate the shadowy parts of the clouds first, then paint the mid-tones, and finally the light tones. This sky is a perfect subject for painting soft, pastel-like color gradations.

The sky with a rainbow is a tough subject to paint. It requires the artist to precisely control color intensity, applying colors gently to create luminosity on paper. Beginning students should paint the cloud shapes mentioned above before turning to this more complicated subject matter.

Hint: Direct observation inspires best results. If you sketch clouds from a window 5-10 minutes a day with pastels or colored pencils, you'll begin to understand cloud formations and their color temperature, and have will produce plenty of reference material for future painting. I often rely on my intuition when recording cloud shapes in my sketch book.

Here are a few points to remember when painting clouds in the sky:

- integrate the clouds into the sky with similar strokes and hues
- use a variety of colors besides grays
- create depth of field with clouds through the use of linear and aerial perspective
- unify the sky with the landscape by using:
- lighter values in the sky than the landscape (excluding storm clouds)
- a few matching pencil hues in both the sky and the ground
- similar rhythmical strokes
- objects in the middle ground that overlap the sky and the ground

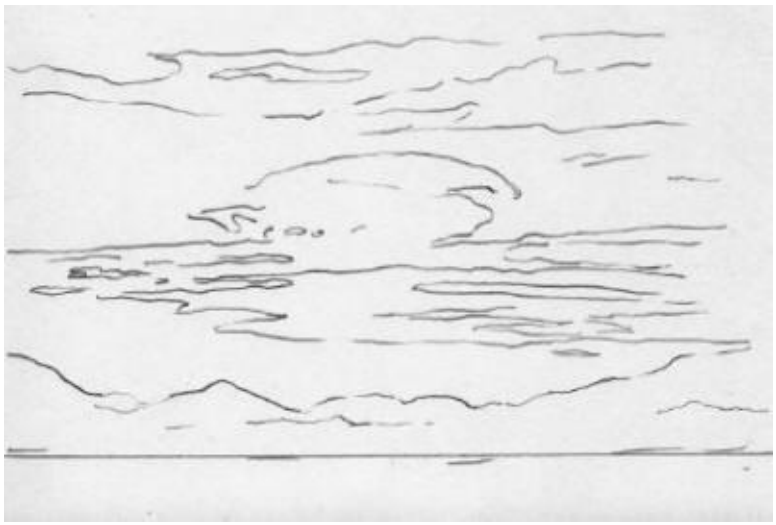
Hint: Start your landscape painting by marking the horizon line first. When shading, work from the background to the foreground (layer in colors of the sky and the mountains in the background first, and eventually proceed to the foreground). Add details last.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Evening Sky over Pisa

This project focuses on a basic layout of stormy cloud shapes. I took this picture standing on the roof of the tower of Pisa in Italy. A breathtaking view opened up to me with this strange cloud formation right in the center.

As usual, the grayscale version of the picture reveals the value gradations rather than color differences in a landscape. Notice that the sky is the source of light, and even on a cloudy day like this one is much lighter in value than the mountain range and the ground. This difference in the light should be orchestrated in the drawing.

Basic Colors: indigo blue, ultramarine, dark green, violet, true blue, lilac, cream, peach and white.



Step 1: Draw the outline of the clouds' top and bottom edges with either light blue pencil or graphite one. Simplify the shapes, focusing on major changes in the sky.

Step 2: With varied pressure and a sharp point of “indigo blue,” draw out the entire picture, layering in the darks. You should rely on your grayscale picture at this point. Keep the edges in the sky very soft and outline the mountain range much more concretely.

Step 3: Add light blues in both the sky and the ground.

Step 4: Burnish the lower region of your picture with a turpenoid, to saturate and blend the colors. Burnishing can be omitted for the sky because it may produce garish contrasts that would mar the subtleties of your cloud formations.

Step 5: Add middle tones and very light tones in the sky with “true blue,” “lilac,” “pink” and “peach.”

Work “dark green” into the ground. To keep the focus on the sky, don’t add too much detail to the mountains.

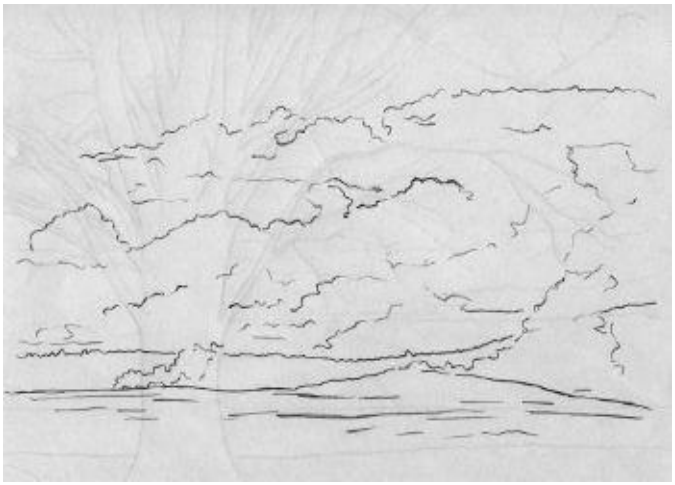
The Evening Sky over Pisa
5 x 7" (13 x 18 cm) · 2008

Step 6: Soften and burnish the sky with a color combination of “white” and cool “light grey.” In this drawing you can exaggerate the “blueness” of the landscape rather than layering in grays only. You might also color the sky with light grays over these colors, while still maintaining the strong presence of blue beneath them.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Yellowstone Afternoon Sky

The reference color photograph for this demonstration is shown in the beginning of this chapter. I took this picture on a sunny and warm day at Yellowstone National Park. The clouds in the sky repeated the shapes of the smoke and haze emerging from the ground. The outlines of the image are simple but the soft value transitions in the clouds require some patience. Notice in the grayscale version, the sky is filled with light and the distant line of fur trees is the darkest area in the picture. The cloud formations closest to the viewer are large and well-defined. As they recede toward the horizon line, the remaining formations gradually become less pronounced and more clustered.

Basic Colors: black, indigo blue, dark green, ultramarine, violet, true blue, grass green, apple green, light cerulean blue, cool grey 50% and white



Step 1: Make an outline of major top and bottom cloud shapes with either graphite pencil or “light cerulean blue.” Don’t use graphite pencil, because the graphite line will darken considerably when lighter colors are layered over it.

Step 2: Draw the darks of the trees and the ground with “black,” “violet,” “indigo blue,” “dark green” and “grass green.” Use vertical strokes for the tree line and horizontal strokes for the ground.

Draw around the major cloud formations with “light blue.” This will help you establish the basic pattern of major clouds seen in the picture, with reference to their size in perspective.

Step 3: Deepen the hues of the sky with “indigo blue” and “true blue.” The sky is a lot darker at the top of the page, turning lighter and warmer close to the clouds. Keep most of the edges soft, with a few outlines in the center. Add a variety of greens into the ground.

Step 4: Because my original picture doesn’t provide me an honest color scheme of the sky, observe the afternoon sky outside. The tops of the clouds reflect lots of light and require very light warm yellow highlights, while the bottom shadows are soft, and need a cool mix of gray-blue-violet. The color of the sky itself (around the clouds) is warm light blue near the horizon line and warm deep blue far away from it.

Block in the darker, lower areas of the clouds (shadows) with the grayish colors of “lilac,” “ultramarine” and “cool grey 50%.” Draw the sky with “light cerulean blue” and “true blue” around crisp, light edges of the clouds.

Add a tint of warm (not lemon) yellow into the clouds’ white highlights to describe the source of light. By layering the colors as described above, you will capture the lit, sharp edge of a cloud, and its diffused shadows. The contrast you create on paper between the blue sky and the white edge renders the illusion of depth in the sky.

Step 5: The final step requires patience, as you must work out fine gradations in the cloud shadows. With a very sharp point of “cool grey 50%,” draw very slight transitions between the clouds’ blues and light yellow lights. In doing this, soften the previous strokes as much as possible. Apply the same grey with “white” over the entire cloud shapes to burnish the surface. Don’t be afraid to simplify the cloud formations, and focus on major changes instead.

With the same color combinations detail the smoke coming out the ground.

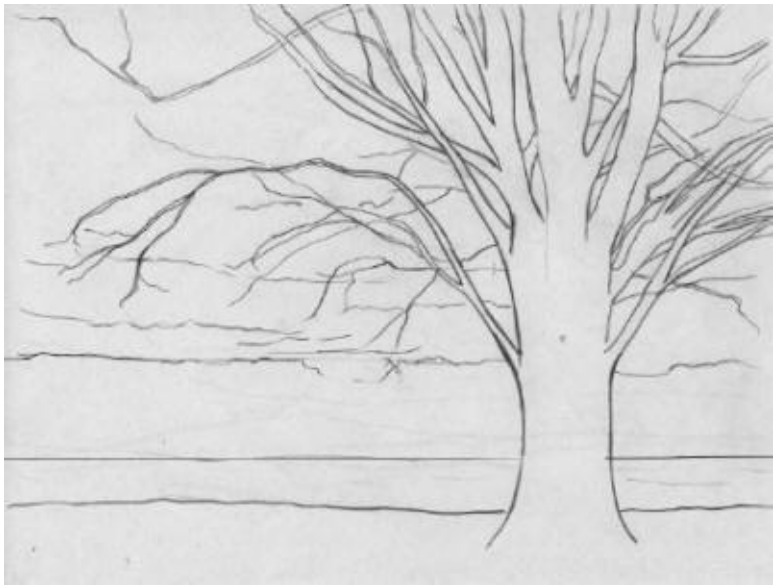
Take care not to intensify the blue sky too much as it must remain lighter in value than the landscape below it. You can burnish some blue areas with “white” to help achieve that.

The Yellowstone Afternoon Sky · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

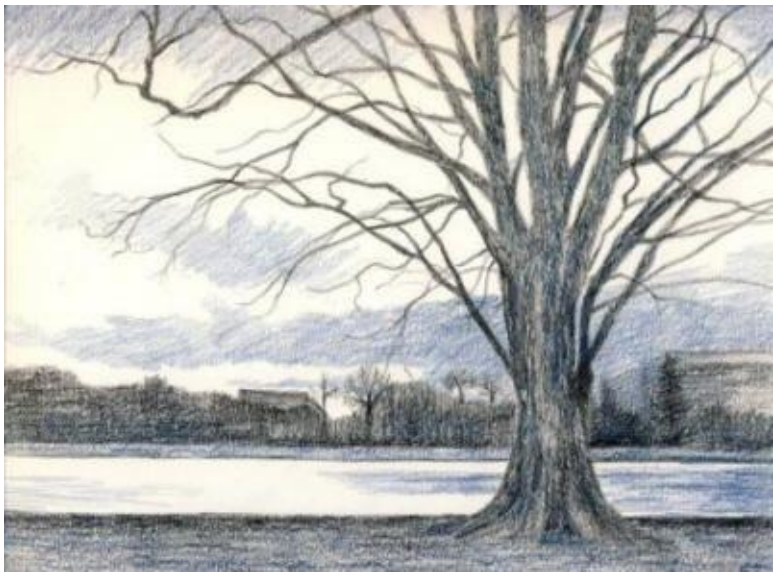
Step-by-Step Demonstration: Sunset

I took this picture on my trip to Washington D.C. The Smithsonian institution is silhouetted against the dramatic sunset.

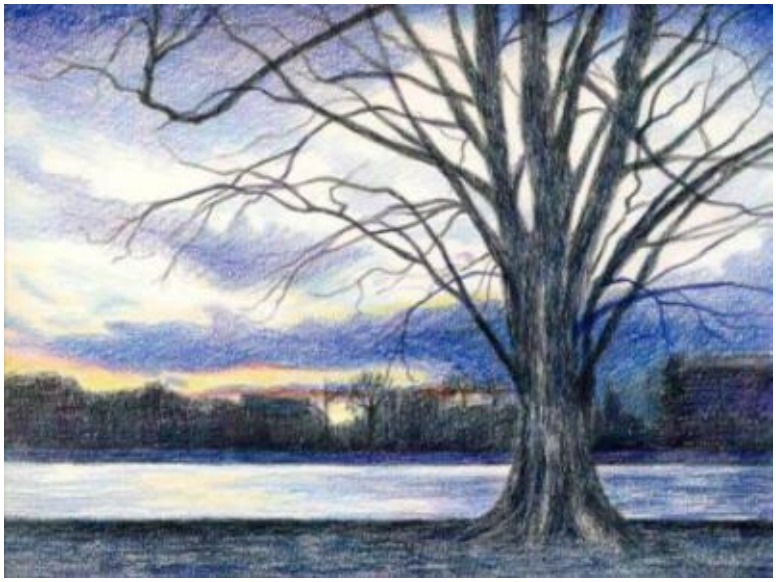
Basic Colors: black, indigo blue, ultramarine, mulberry, violet, true blue, poppy red, sienna brown, yellow and white.



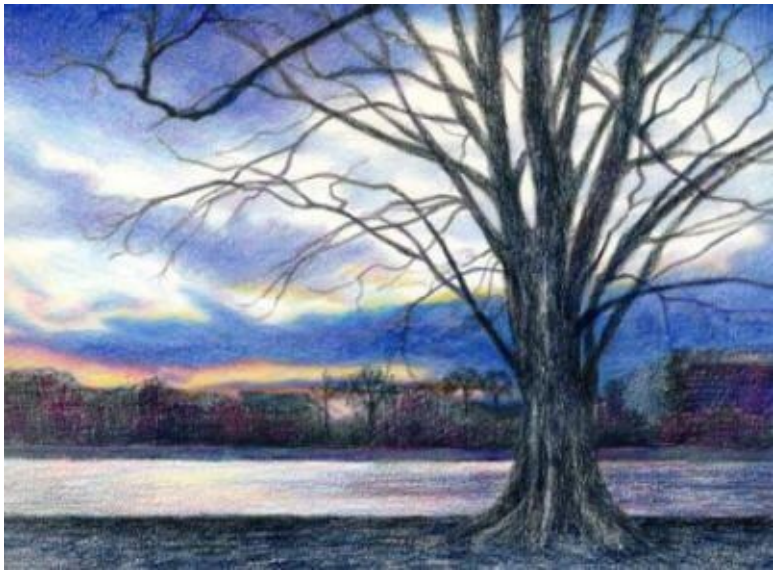
Step 1: Draw the horizon line, dividing the space into two thirds. Outline other objects with either a graphite or light color pencil like “cream” or “yellow.” Placed off center, the big tree is the dominant shape in the picture, creating interesting patterns with its branches.



Step 2: In this step, work on the darks. Using a sharp point, directional strokes, and medium pressure of “black,” shade in the darks in the tree and the ground. Add “indigo blue” over it and in the sky. Do not burnish the surface, because it will look dull.



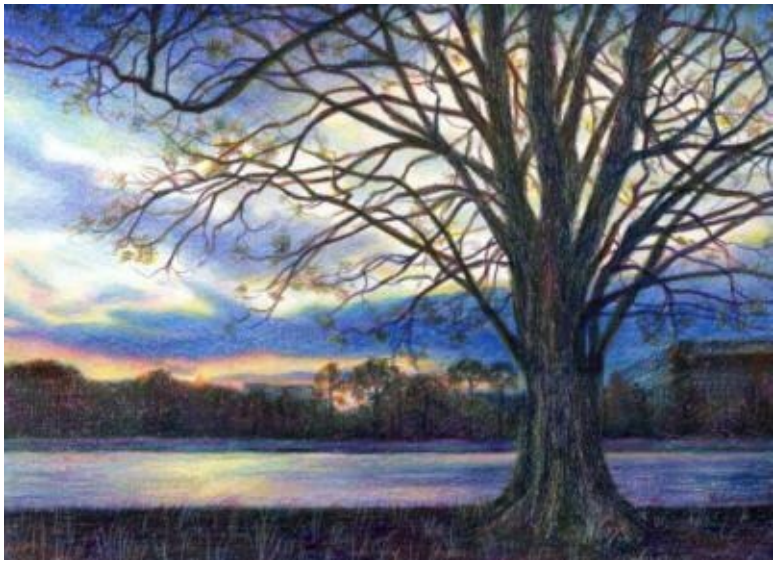
Step 3: Introduce color in the sky by drawing the middle-range values with “violet” and “ultramarine.” Form the cloud shapes with the lightest colors, following the basic outline of the cloud formation.



Step 4: Burnish the sky with a colorless blender and then with “white” and “powder blue” to unify and soften the hues. Add “mulberry” or “violet” over black in the distant trees and the lake.

Step 5: With a dark color mix, work meticulously on branches by copying their curvature and direction. Add “sienna brown” to warm up a few distant trees and branches at this time.

Make final value adjustments by darkening some areas in the landscape, if necessary.

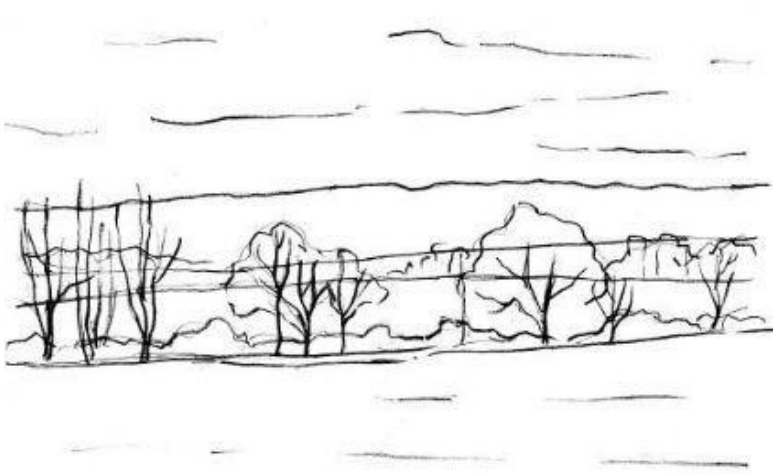


Sunset at the Lake · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Pennsylvania Landscape

This is a fairly simple landscape image to practice drawing. It doesn’t have any geometric shapes, and requires less accuracy in painting the natural forms.

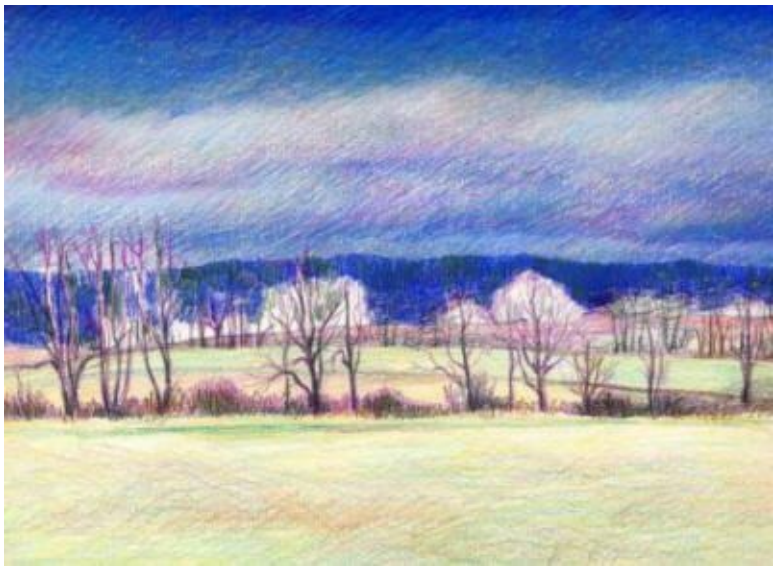
Basic Colors: black, ultramarine, dark green, mulberry, true blue, sienna brown, light cerulean blue, true green, yellow and white.



Step 1: To make an outline, draw the horizon line, the mountain range and the field line. Next, outline the trees and clouds.

Step 2: With varied pressure and a sharp pencil, work on the darks with “ultramarine” in the background and a mix of “mulberry” and “black” in the bushes.

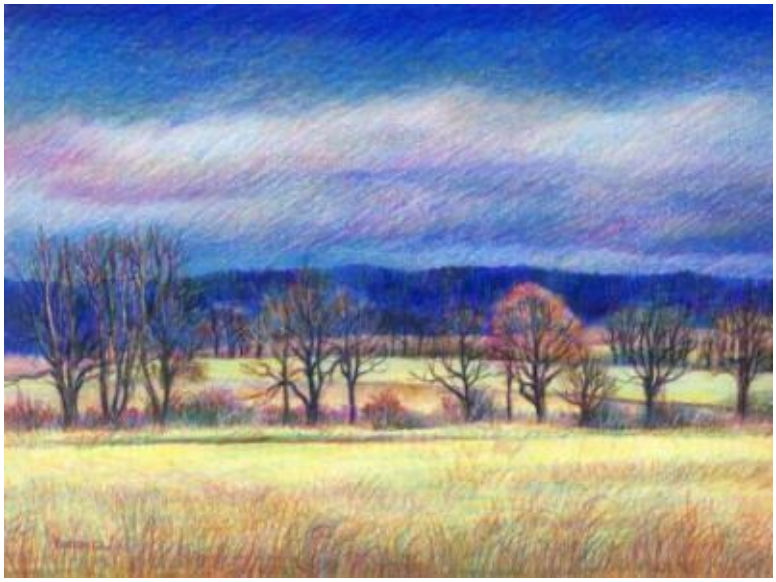
Add yellowish ochre colors in the fields.



Step 3: Working from background to foreground, draw the sky with blues and burnish it with lighter pencils. Add greens in the mountains. Add light greens to the fields. With directional strokes, layer “sienna brown” in the bushes and trees.

Step 4: Working from background to foreground, draw the sky with blues and burnish it with lighter pencils. Add greens in the mountains. Add light greens to the fields. With directional strokes, layer “sienna brown” in the bushes and trees.

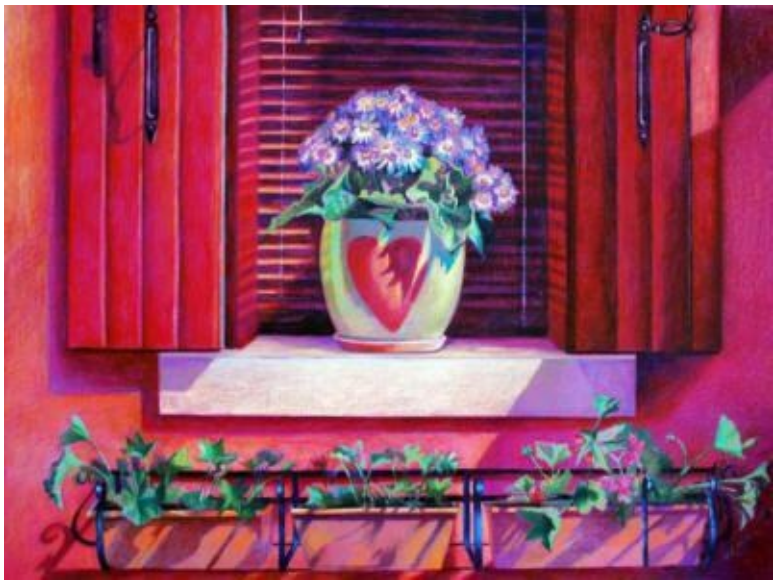
Step 5: Burnish the fields and bushes with a colorless blender and “white” (or another light color). Evaluate the values. Is the background dark enough to make the field with trees look more definite?



Fields of Pennsylvania · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

Step 6: With medium to heavy pressure and sharp pencil point work on the trees and blades of grass with various pencils. Adjust minor details and values around the trees to blend them more with the surrounding space.

Chapter Ten



Burano, Flower Pot · 19 x 25" (48 x 63 cm) · 2009

Demystifying the Rules of Perspective: Drawing Cityscapes, Interiors & Streets

"Art itself is immortal, and its creations seem to try to keep up with it, for immortality confers perfection" -- Hokusai

In medieval times, when the fine art and architecture of the Greco-Roman era was lost, Leonardo Da Vinci was one of the first renaissance men who recognized the importance of aerial and linear perspective in painting. Depicting the royalty of the times, the artist painted his landscape backgrounds with soft, subdued colors. His famous works "Mona Lisa" and "St. John the Baptist" are high examples of knowledge in portraying the atmospheric perspective of mystical Italian scenery with bluish, unsaturated colors. Another Italian painter, Masaccio, was the first to recreate correct geometric (linear) perspective in his 1427 fresco "Trinity with the Virgin, St. John and Donors." The artist used the single vanishing point to construct the perspective with figures accurately placed within the church interior. In contrast to the renaissance artists, the 19th century English painters categorized as the Pre-Raphaelites purposely ignored linear perspective in their art. They derived their inspiration from the spiritual, colorful artwork of medieval culture. Contemporary painters make use of a wide range of techniques, either striving for representational accuracy or denying it. Whatever the artistic goal, it's important to be aware of the rules and learn from them in order to experiment with the available artistic vocabulary.

List of Terms Used in This Chapter

Aerial or atmospheric perspective refers to the effect of the atmosphere on the appearance of shapes at different distances in a landscape or cityscape.

Linear perspective is a system of drawing sizes and distances into a unified order that expresses the depth of field—with foreground, middle ground and background.

Foreshortening is the visual effect produced when an object or distance appears shorter than it actually is because of angularity towards the artist. Side walls of buildings, faces and the bodies of models or animals can all be foreshortened due to this optical illusion.

Vanishing point is the apex of converging lines situated on the horizon line.

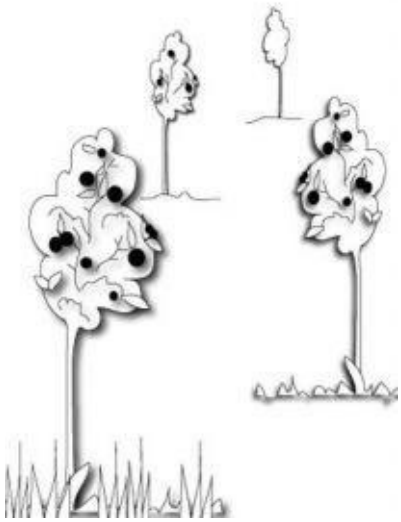
Understanding Aerial Perspective

In painting, artists strive to create an illusion of depth on a two-dimensional surface. To achieve this goal in landscape painting, artists employ their knowledge of atmospheric perspective. They depict distant objects as blurred, soft and pale, and near objects as more detailed and vivid. Artists are also aware of differences in contrast and saturation in landscapes. In this photograph, there are four planes: green field with the fence, a line up of brown trees with white blooming trees, a mountain range, and the sky. Each plane has its own color saturation, texture and details. The fence is the most vivid, outlined and detailed object, while the distant mountains are blue and sketchy.

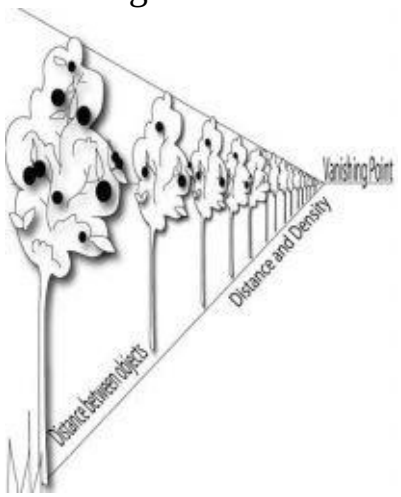
To get a better understanding of aerial perspective, employ the following essential rules when painting outdoors.

Consider the size of objects in the landscape: larger shapes come forward and smaller ones move further away.

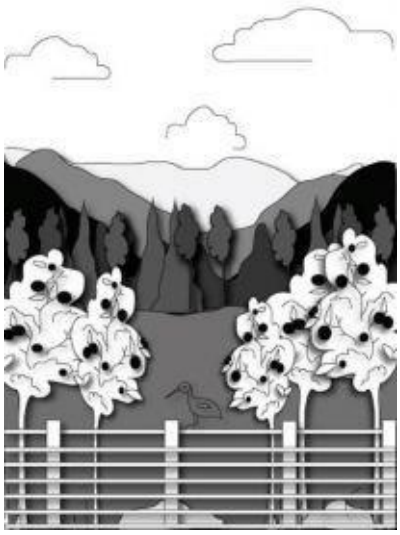
Compose drawing with some overlapping of shapes that gives realistic sense of depth. Partially cover one object with another one. For instance, cover a distant building with a foreground tree.



Pay attention to texture: lots of textural forms appear in the foreground and less or no texture is noticed in the background. Textural density decreases as the eye moves further away from the foreground.



Know the rule of spacing. There are large distances between objects in close proximity to viewers (the foreground), while distances become shorter between objects located further away from the viewers (the middle ground and background).



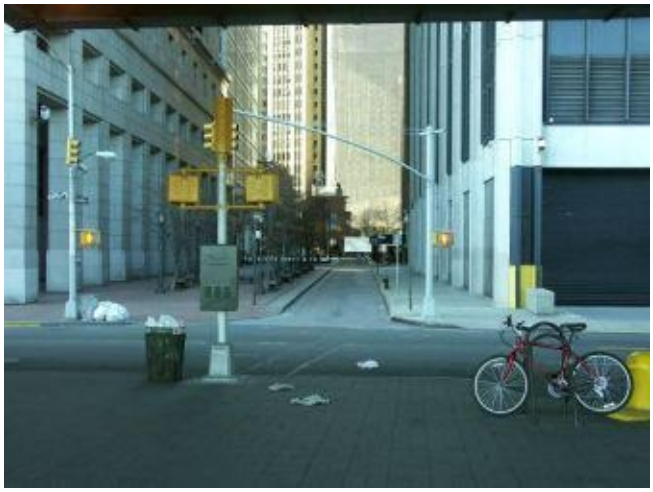
Draw foreground shapes in focus and fine detail. Reduce the level of detail as objects recede in space.

Remember to employ high-key, intense or bright colors in the foreground. Mute or fade them to blues, grays and lavenders in the background.

Choose images with visible shadows to paint. Shadows give physical presence to objects and describe their dimensions, providing the artist with dynamic sense of depth. Always examine the panorama and use darker shadows in the foreground and lighter ones in the background (in a landscape).

These are observational tips on aerial perspective that support the rules of linear perspective described below.

This reference photo “Pisa mountain range” illustrates the effect of aerial perspective in a landscape with cooler background colors and warmer foreground hues. Notice, every mountain range loses its color intensity as it recedes into the distance.



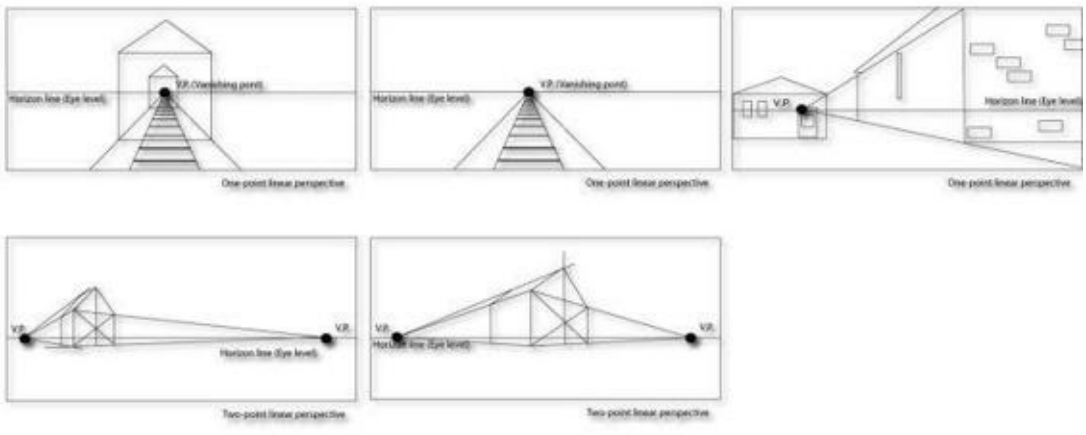
Understanding Linear Perspective

Early in the 15th century, the Italian architect Filippo Brunelleschi rediscovered the geometrical perspective, where all lines converge in one vanishing point on the horizon line. Leonardo's "The Last Supper," Raphael's "The School of Athens" and Masaccio's "The Holy Trinity" were first examples in understanding and depicting the geometric perspective in painting. This picture of a street in New York City illustrates linear perspective, with the lines of the street converging into the vanishing point far in the distance.

One-point Perspective vs. Two-point Perspective

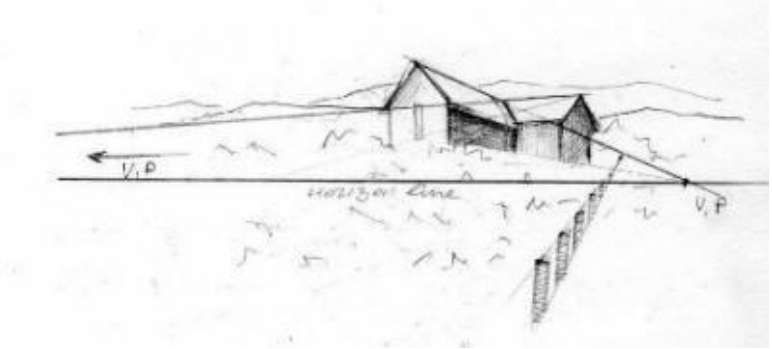
The linear drawings below demonstrate the theoretical depiction of one-point and two-point geometrical perspectives, in which objects parallel to the viewer are foreshortened in accordance with the rules.

One-point linear perspective has a single vanishing point on a horizon line, and depicts the front objects with lines that directly face the viewer,—like roads, railroad tracks, buildings, fences and so on. These objects are parallel with the viewer's eye level (or horizon line). The first two linear drawings of the railroad below illustrate the convergence of lines into a vanishing point. Third linear drawing depicts the vanishing point situated on the left side of the horizon line, which affects the foreshortening and the scale of the building's sidewall to the right.



Two-point linear perspective has two vanishing points with two sets of parallel lines on the horizon line (or eye level). This perspective depicts rotated objects in space, such as the corner of a barn, a house, *etc.* Based on the

orientation of the landscape in relation to whichever corner of the focal point faces the viewer (the corner of a barn, for example), one wall will recede towards one vanishing point; the other wall will recede towards the second vanishing point (illustrated here). The opposite vanishing points might be situated at different distances from the focal point, however, affecting the side view of the object (in this case, the barn). One side of the wall might be much shorter as opposed to the other long side.



Hint: When constructing landscapes with a fence in the foreground, a barn in the background, and some trees in the middle ground, find a vanishing point on the horizon line and draw straight lines from it. Those lines will determine the size of the vanishing fence and trees. The objects will appear large close to you and smaller in the distance.

The Eye Level

The horizon line placement in the picture matches the artist's *eye level* when looking at the scene. So, these terms "the horizon line" and "the eye level" become interchangeable. Depending on the artist's position relative to the landscape, the perspective view of the street changes.

Low Eye Level

When the artist views the landscape or cityscape while positioned below the ground plane of the focal point (the focal point is the street shown here), it's called *the low eye level*. The horizon line is located above the artist, looking up at the lights.

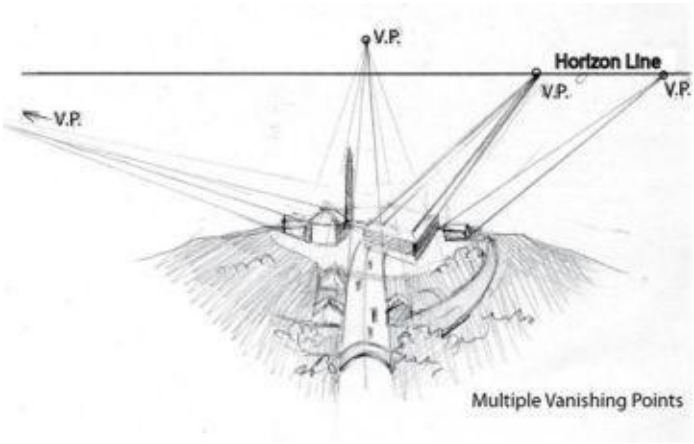
High Eye Level

When the artist is looking at the landscape while positioned above the ground plane of the focal point (the focal point is the countryside shown here), it's called *the high eye level*. The horizon line divides the sky and the cityscape. The artist is standing on the roof and looking down at the city.

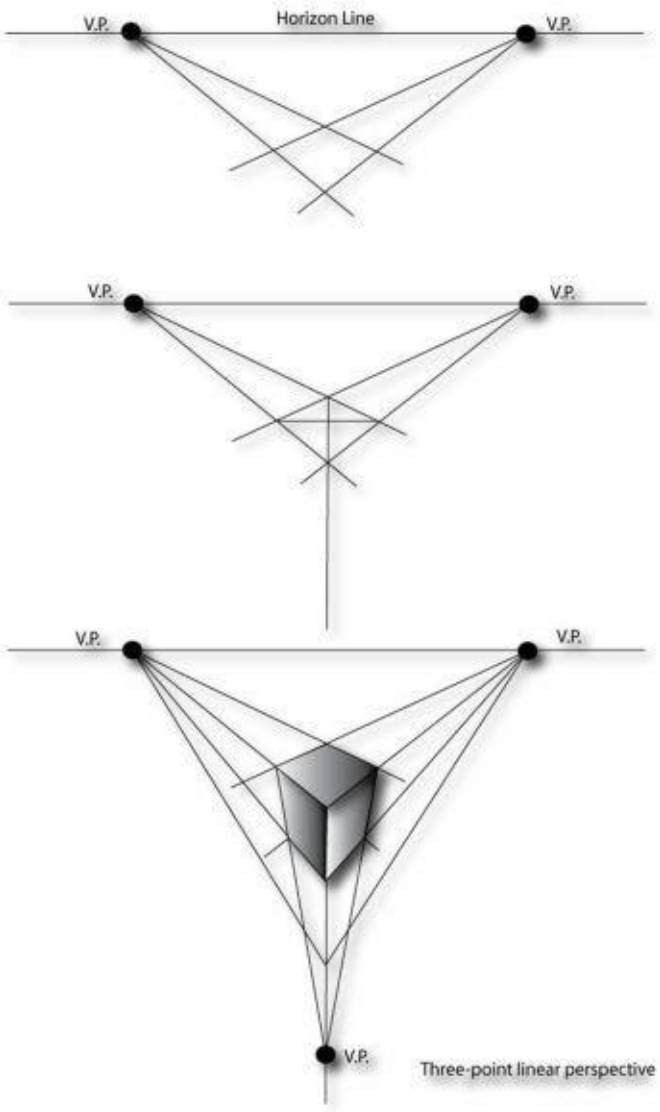
Normal Eye Level

When the artist is looking at the landscape or cityscape while level with the ground plane of the focal point (the focal point is the exterior view of a Venetian building shown here), it's called *the normal eye level*. The artist's eye level crosses the windows above the ground plane but not above the roof itself and as a result, the artist is looking straight at the center of interest (the windows). This normal eye level view is the most common type of the scene depicted in paintings. To enhance the creativity of your work, place the center of interest above or below the eye level.

Three-Point and Multiple-point Perspective



Three-point perspective is more complex to depict in painting and usually shows buildings seen from far above or below (looking at the skyscrapers from the roof down or looking down at the village situated on a hill or looking up at the tall castle, located on the mountain peak and so on). In addition to the familiar two vanishing points situated on the horizon line—one for each wall—there is the third one below (or above) the ground, located on the line perpendicular to the horizon line. This third vanishing point determines how those walls recede into the ground (or space above). There are three groups of lines and each group comes out of its respective vanishing point. These lines are not parallel to each other. Using the tree-point perspective might severely deform the object's shape depending on the point of view. The line illustration shows the basics of constructing such perspective.



Three-point perspective or multiple-point perspective demands a lot of skill from the artist to construct an accurate image. Drawing the inevitable foreshortening of buildings and figures in such perspective might be challenging for beginning artists. So it makes sense to stick to the one-point and two-point perspectives at first, while creatively exploring the abundance of possibilities in landscape or cityscape painting. Beginners can even practice with landscapes that have *zero-point perspective*. Zero-point perspective has no parallel lines and no vanishing point visibly seen in the landscape of nonlinear scenery. Pictures with a mountain range or a corn field are examples of it. The artist sees no buildings or any other structures with parallel lines in the landscape but still recreates the sense of depth in his artwork with differences in scale and use of the aerial perspective.

Drawing Cityscape

Cityscape drawing is popular among artists. It portrays the man-made linear structures of verticals and horizontals like buildings, streets and interiors. I think cityscape drawing is more challenging than landscape painting, but artists should not be intimidated by its complexity. Knowing the rules of perspective will help you create beautiful imagery.

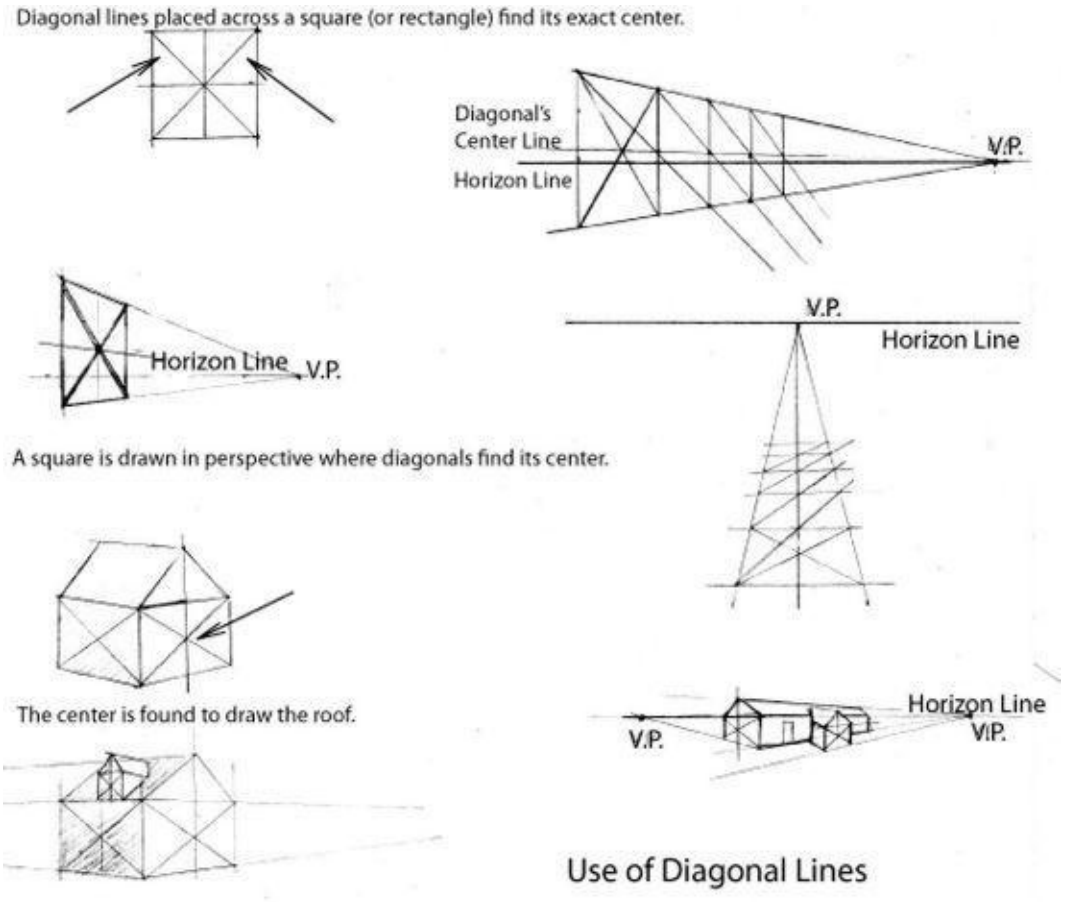
To determine the best composition for your artwork, it is practical to use a viewfinder that sorts out the overwhelming amount of information facing you.

In addition, it is helpful to have a ruler on hand to measure distances and make correct straight lines.

Facing the cityscape, it’s best to begin by drawing the horizon line, the vanishing points and their receding lines. Such a first sketch will show the “skeleton” of parallel and perpendicular lines, representing the accurate scale and proportion of the buildings. The second step is drawing tonally from general to specific, by placing basic dark tones first and adding lighter ones later. When shading, sketch from background to foreground, paying attention to cast shadows and highlights. In final step, add textures and details.

The line illustration below shows the use of diagonals in perspective drawing. It explains how to find a center in the house wall and draw a roof. It also illustrates how to draw hallway floors and side views of the buildings. You begin

by drawing a square or rectangle and placing diagonal lines across it to find its exact center. Then, you draw the parallel line going across this center to find the exact position of the roof's apex.



In cityscape drawing I often notice having two or more the inclined streets. Each inclined street has its own vanishing point to which objects on that street (cars, buses and people) will foreshorten and converge Also there is usually a different vanishing point situated on the horizon line to depict the receding buildings.

Hint: When figuring out the location of the vanishing points in the photograph, it's helpful to place a piece of tracing (or any transparent) paper over the image and copy the converging lines with the ruler. This quick linear sketch will suggest the position of the vanishing points on the horizon line.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Italian Street

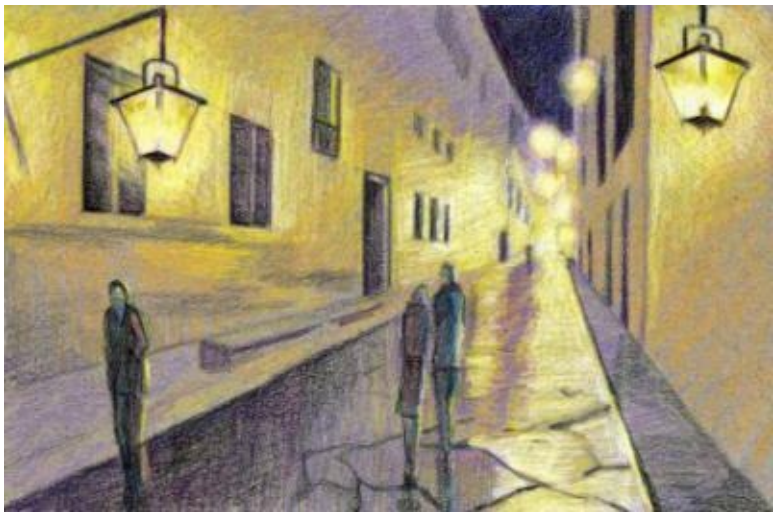
This project – a straightforward drawing intended for beginners—illustrates the use of one-point perspective. . I took this picture in Italy, mesmerized with the enchanting lights of the night. Notice, that I use a combination of two images to create a single drawing. I often collage more than two pictures in one artwork to capture my idea on paper. Collaging is fun, but it often poses its own problems. Different light conditions, size relationships and objects' points of view make it harder to combine the pictures effectively in one realistic, unified piece. Fantasy and surreal images give more liberties for visual experimentation, where the use of perspective, objects' size and relationships can be exaggerated and manipulated. However, any successful collaged artwork still must have good sense of color and design.

Basic Colors: indigo blue, dark purple, black grape, chocolate, violet blue, aquamarine, sienna brown, poppy red, canary yellow, yellow ochre, yellowed orange, and white and Stonehenge colored paper in medium tone

Step 1: Evaluate values, colors and composition. Draw on smooth colored paper, because the light appears more striking and luminous on colored surface.

Find the vanishing point and draw straight lines from it to figure out basic scale of the buildings, doors and windows. Block in the lights with "yellowed orange" and "white.

Step 2: Add “white” over the yellows and draw the darkest areas with “black grape.” Use a fine pencil point and medium-to-heavy pressure. You can spill over the edges, which later get covered with middle-toned pencils. Use the ruler to draw the lamps with “indigo blue” and “black grape.”



Step 3: Add mid-tones with “lilac,” “orange,” “sienna brown” or any other similar color. The idea here is to bridge the values between the darks and the lights smoothly. Reestablish the lines of the windows with sharp pencil point if needed.

Italian Street at Night. Florence · 5 x 7" (13 x 18 cm) · 2008

Step 4: Focus on texture of the brick walls and the uneven pavement on the street. Blend the highlights in the distance with a colorless blender. Reapply the yellows with “white” in the lamps for stronger contrast. Leave the texture of the walls in the foreground untouched for more authentic look, and blend the distant elements with a colorless blender or “light grey.”

Drawing Interiors

The drawing of interior spaces follows the same rules of linear perspective previously discussed in this chapter. It is a laborious process to construct the interior space, requiring a basic conceptual understanding of perspective. If I draw from my picture, I always compensate for my camera lens' distortions. Many lines in the picture look crooked or even concave. My basic knowledge of linear perspective helps me to eliminate this problem in my drawing. Also, I check distances constantly and make all lines precise and definite even when coloring. I consider this project to be for the advanced artists. With patience and practice, any student can achieve good results

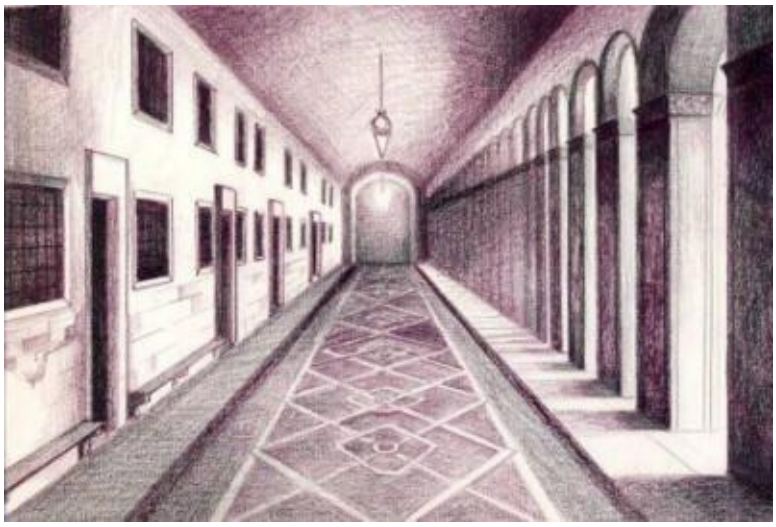
Step-by-Step Demonstration for the Advanced Students: Venetian Hallway

Basic Colors: black, black cherry, dark purple, chocolate, violet blue, canary yellow, and white.

Step 1: Create an outline. Find the horizon line and its vanishing point first by drawing lines over the photo and then copying those into the drawing. The vanishing point is located above the distant floor line. Measure the width of the floor and the ceiling and draw four lines from the vanishing point.

Sketch the vertical columns on the right side and doors with windows on the other. I simplified the picture, omitting extra details in the ceiling and the doors. The illusion of distance makes the size of all objects disappear into the space.

Step 2: Block in the darks with “black cherry” or any other dark color. It is important not to lose the graphite lines while coloring. So redefine the perspective lines with colored pencil and the ruler once again and shade columns, windows and doors with varied pencil pressure.



Step 3: Reinforce the darks once again with “black.” Burnish the surface carefully if the goal is to have a smooth surface.

Dodge’s Palace Venetian Hallway · 9 x 11" (23 x 28 cm) · 2008

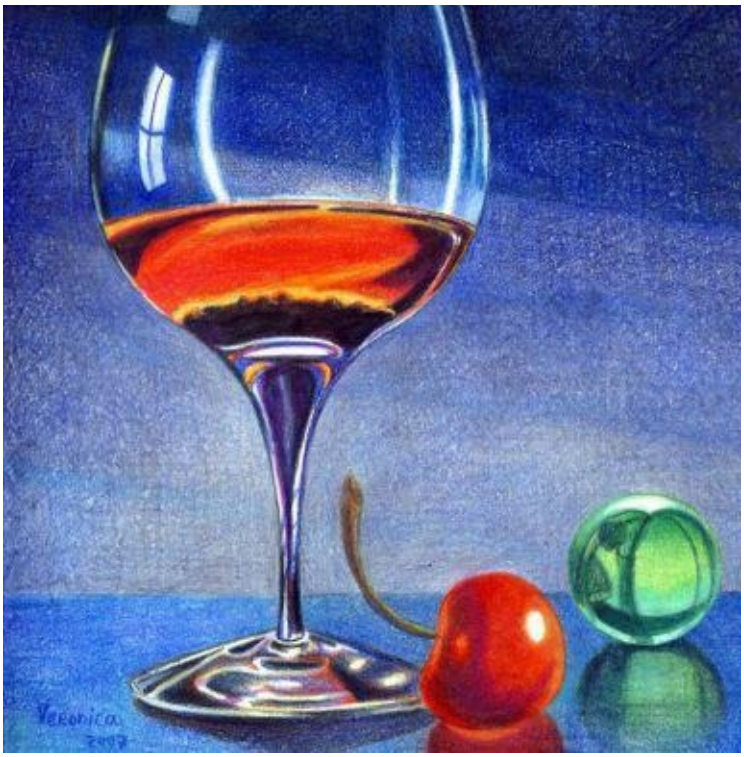
Step 4: Add various light colors and burnish the surface again.

Chapter Eleven

Still Life with Crystal and Marbles · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2007 · Private collection

Drawing Geometric Shapes: Vases

"Beauty is something wonderful and strange that the artist fashions out of the chaos of the world in the torment of his soul." -- W. Somerset Maugham



Every successful realistic drawing reveals the solid drafting skills of the artist. The more precise the drawing, the better chance of getting beautiful results. Representational drawing requires perfectionism from the artist to create the convincing illusion of volume on paper. Accurate drafting of round shapes and ellipses is one of the requirements for achieving realistic painting, in addition to a basic understanding of linear perspective, which is used even in a still life painting.

Some artists have a good sense of precision, drafting geometric shapes free-hand. I don't belong to that category of painters because my shapes often slip over one side and the vase's sides are never symmetrical. That is why I use the drafting technique, crafting the outlines of the vases and other geometric objects in my still life works. The drafting method works well for me but disappoints some students who find it too time-consuming or even frustrating in achieving the effects they desire.

The drafting method includes folding the image to insure symmetry, drafting circles and ellipses, and using a T square with clear plastic rulers for drawing accurate angles and straight parallel lines. Because of the nature of this long preparatory work, I prefer sketching on semi-transparent tracing paper to work out all the lines and curves before transferring my final composition onto fine paper. I change and redo the drawing as much as needed on tracing paper. Otherwise, too much grime gets onto the light areas of the drawing, undermining the illusion of volume in the final piece.

List of Terms Used in This Chapter

Drafting Method –technical drawing; the method of creating precise representational architectural and engineering drawings of objects with accurate circles, curves and angles. Today, technical drawing is automated with CAD.

Symmetry –the correspondence in size, form or arrangement of parts on opposite sides of a plane or line, characterized by proportional beauty.

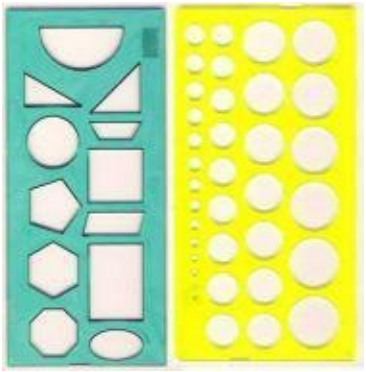
Using Drafting Tools

I use a *T square* to draw parallel lines and to hold *triangles* (triangular shaped rulers), when drawing the sides of a bottle or a vase or drafting angles. I pay constant attention to the positioning of the rulers so I don't throw off the angles.

I also have a set of drafting templates, used to draft recurring objects quickly, but I don't use them as often as craftsmen.

In addition to these I like to draw curves and ellipses with a French curve, which looks like a complex curvy ruler. All templates and rulers are sold in stores and online.

But most often, I use a folding technique in my drawing, where I do a freehand outline of the vase, choose the best side to copy and draw the symmetrical outline.

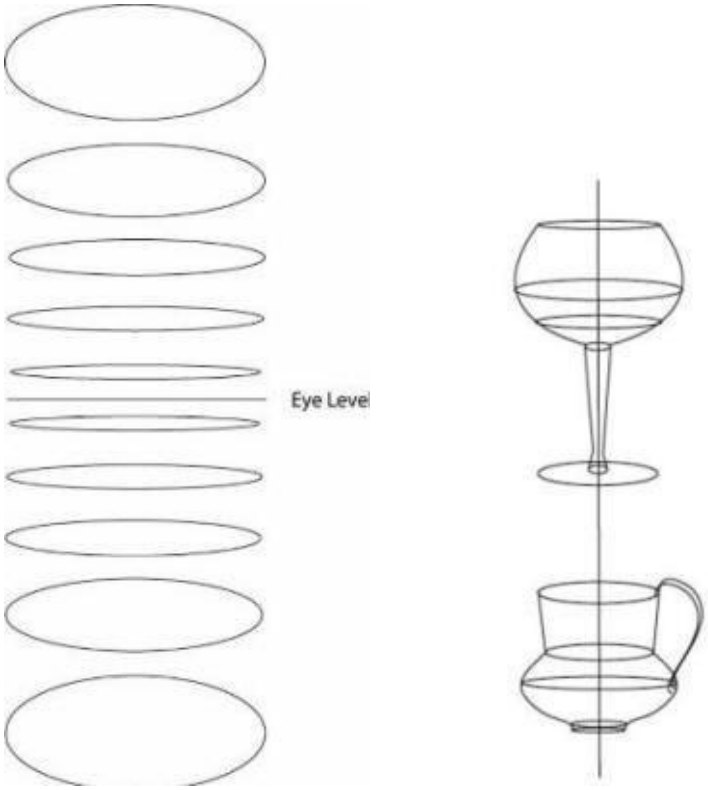


Drawing Ellipses in Perspective

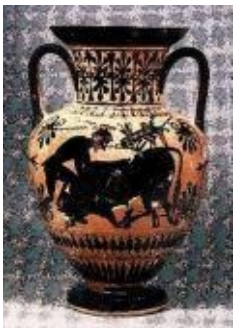
Drawing ellipses is problematic for many beginning artists. I suggest relying on this schematic drawing to observe your cup or vase in perspective. An ellipse is a circle in perspective and by changing the eye level the ellipse transforms to either wider or thinner spherical shape. Look straight at the glass or cup and start turning it slightly up and down to see how the rim and bottom of a cup change in space.

Notice that the ellipse flattens as it moves closer to the horizon line. So, the cups, vases, plates or bottles will have different roundness at the top and bottom depending on the artist's eye level.

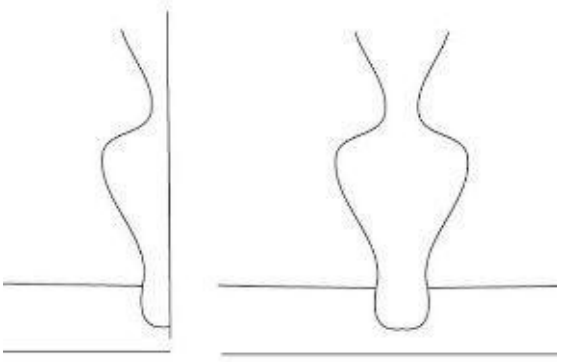
I suggest drawing ellipses freehand many times before setting up a still life drawing. You should get a firm grip on this drafting skill. Here is the line drawing illustrating ellipses in objects at various degrees above or below the eye level.



Understanding Folding



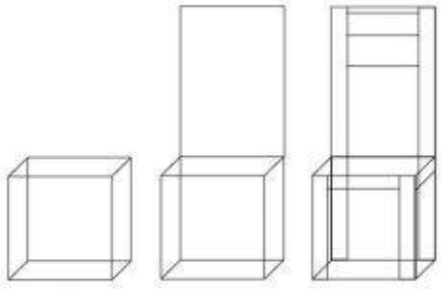
Besides drawing the accurate ellipses it's important to depict objects symmetrically. Symmetry evokes harmonic beauty in art. The Greek Pantheon, the Egyptian Pyramids, the Renaissance Churches represent excellence of architectural proportion. Ancient Greco-Roman and Chinese pottery shows excellence of symmetrical designs. Some contemporary painters reject the notion of symmetry arriving at highly stylized approach to painting. Yet, if the goal is to paint realistically, depiction of symmetrical shapes is a must.



Folding is the most common method of making the object's sides symmetrical. It's one of my favorite techniques for producing good results fairly quickly.

As an exercise pick a single object like a bottle or a vase. Make a free-hand drawing of the shape and divide the sketch vertically in its center. Use a ruler to draw the center line. Then, fold the image vertically down the line. Choose the side that looks best and trace it onto the other side (fold the sketch with the back sides facing each other).

These are other approaches to drawing symmetrical shapes like a cup and a chair. They illustrate the concept of placing every object within a very simple basic shape first.



In a cup, draw a vertical line first, marking the length of the object. Add the horizon line across it to mark the width of the cup. Draw a square and an ellipse. Mark the equal distances for the lower ellipse and connect the sides. Erase extra lines and draw the handle on one side.

To draw geometric shapes accurately it’s important to visualize the objects transparently. This chair is a solid object but if the artist visualizes it three-dimensionally, it’s a lot easier to draft it in space. The chair is broken down to basic shapes of a square and rectangles. Extra lines are erased later.

Step-by-Step Demonstration: Green Vase and Peas

I set this still life up interested in the beauty of the field flowers. Their soft pastel colors work in harmony with the diffused lighting in the background.

Basic Colors: Indigo blue, violet, ultramarine, dark green, apple green, true green, process red, mulberry, poppy red, light blue, yellow ochre, cream and white.

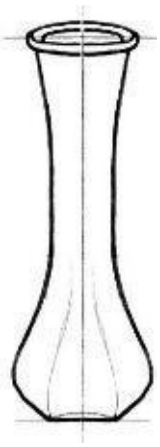
Other Materials: 2HB pencil, ruler, sharpie, tracing paper

Step 1: Figure out your composition beforehand to determine the exact size and proportion of the vase.

With no erasing, make a freehand drawing of a vase on tracing paper with 2HB graphite pencil to capture its basic size, shape and relative distances.

When satisfied with the basic vase shape, draw horizontal lines for both top and bottom ellipses. To make perfect ellipses, measure equal distances from the center line, mark the points and draw the ellipse between these marks. Keep in mind that the ellipse flattens as it moves closer to the horizon line.

Step 2: Split the vase in two with a vertical line running across it. Fold the drawing in the center line and choose one of two sides to be your guide (outlined with a sharpie). Erase the graphite lines on the other side.

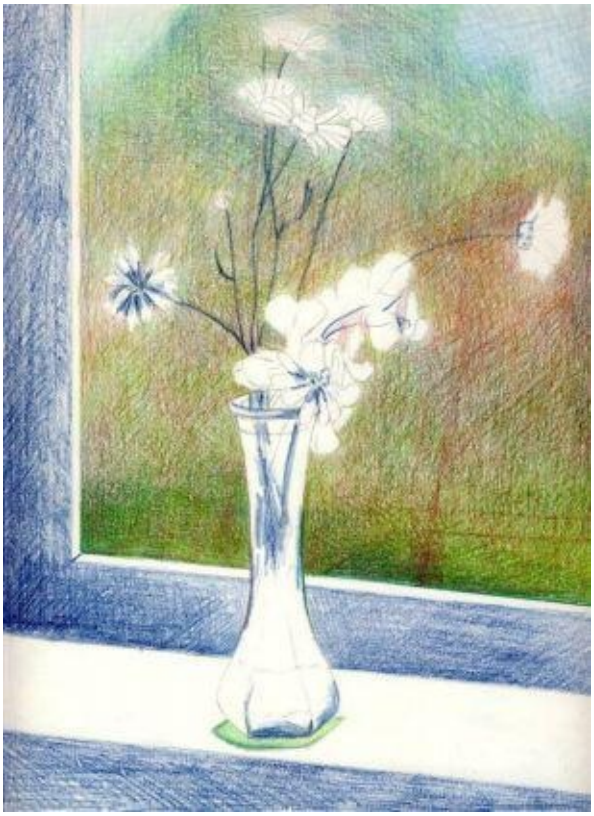


Step 3: While folded, trace your chosen best side onto the other side with a pencil and complete the final outline with the sharpie.

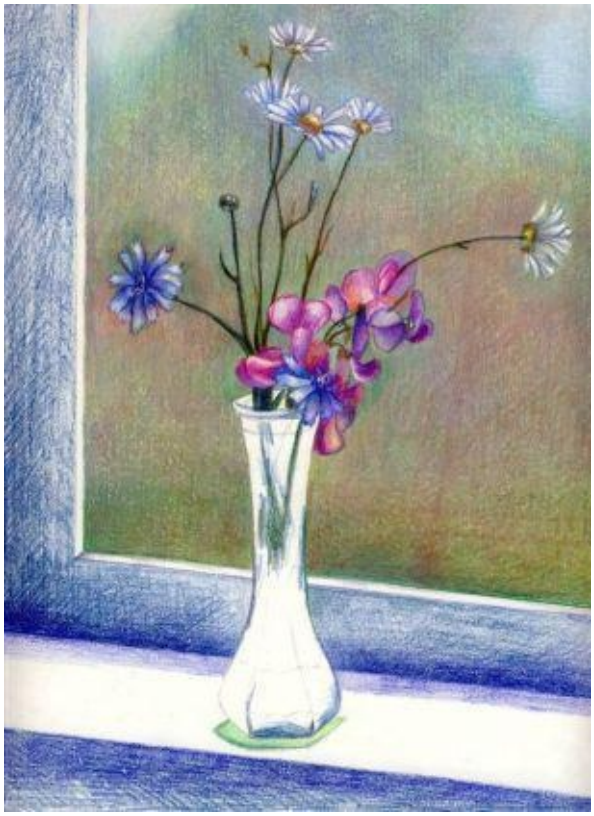
Step 4: Paying attention to your composition, transfer this vase outline onto fine paper. You can use a window during the day for transferring the images, taping the papers' corners with a masking tape to prevent sliding.

Some students experience extreme frustration at this point, and never finish up the accurate transferral. You must keep your hand steady to transfer the outlines with maximum precision.

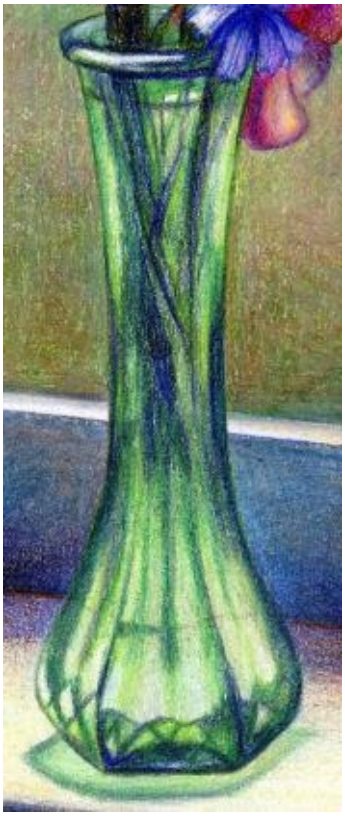
Next, make a freehand drawing of flowers and the window frame.



Step 5: Finally, color! Block in the darks with medium pressure of “indigo blue” and the background with greens and reds. Blend the surface with a turpenoid and let it dry.



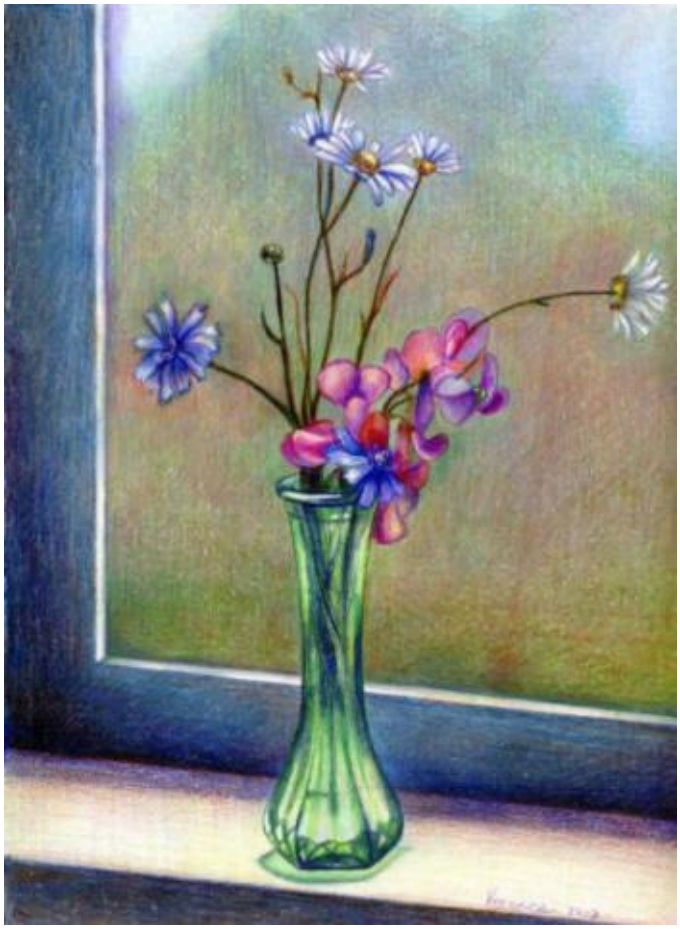
Step 6: I draw the flowers with a variety of cool reds like “process red” and “mulberry.” Use “ultramarine” and “light blue” to color daisies with blue flowers. Mix “indigo blue” and “dark green” with browns to define the stems. Blend the background colors of the window with “white” to make the flowers stand out more.



Step 7: Use the sharp point of “indigo blue” to add crisp lines to the vase. Add cool greens like “true green” with touches of warm “apple green.”

The key to painting glass realistically is to repeat its exact highlights and reflections. I suggest you simplify those and choose only the largest highlights to draw.

I’m very meticulous about drawing out the reflections. It’s easier to look for them in a reference photo than in the actual still life because there are no constant changes in light, value and shapes.



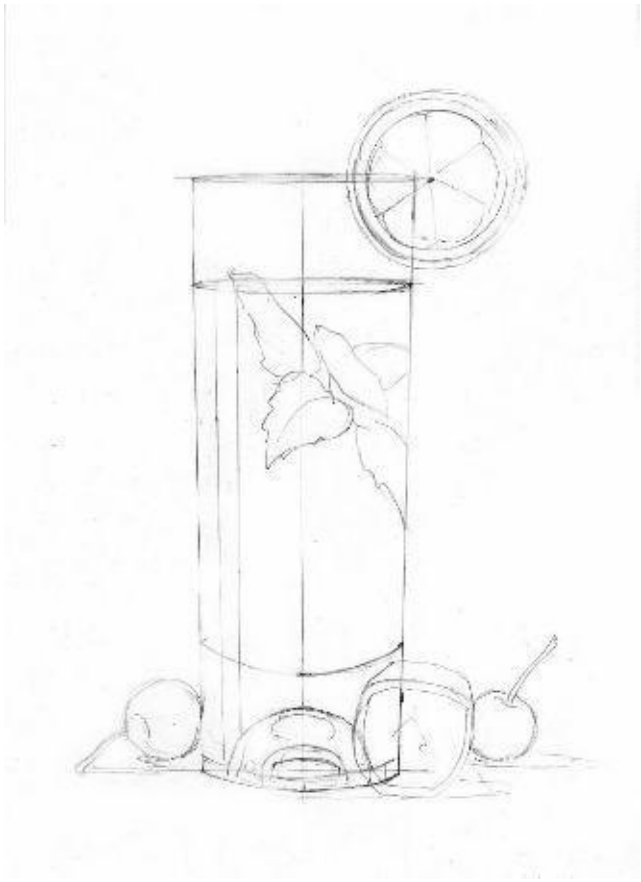
Green Vase and Peas · 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2007 · Private collection

Step 8: I step back and evaluate the contrast in the drawing. I make sure that flowers have varied edges and the vase still looks symmetrical. I finish with more burnishing if needed.

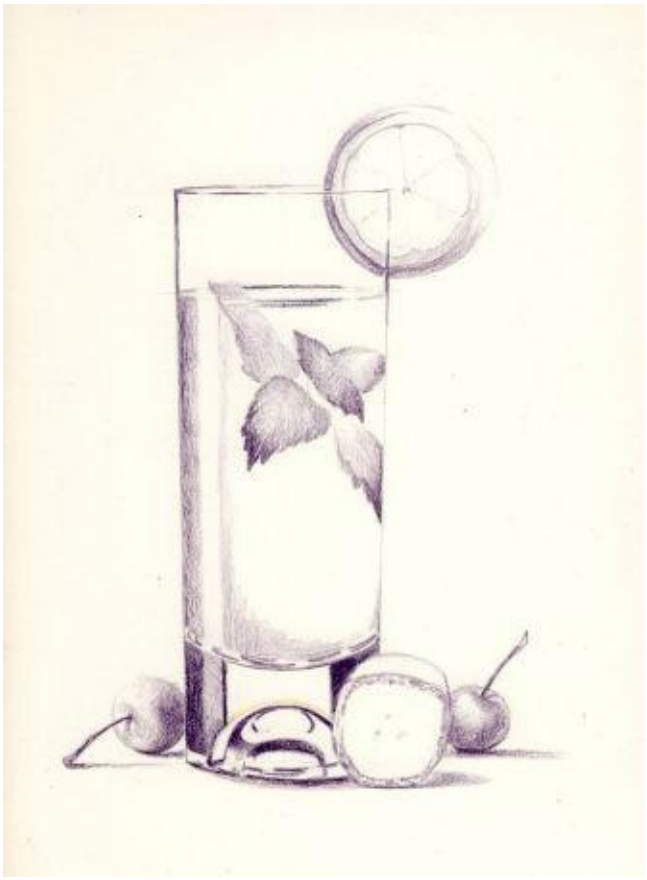
Step-by-Step Demonstration: Glass with Banana and Cherries

Basic Colors: black grape, dark purple, dark green, apple green, cream, canary yellow, poppy red, crimson red.

This drawing is a collage of different elements in one still life. It was drawn from various reference sources and my memory, thus I don’t have a single reference photo per se. I present this project to help students understand how images can be constructed from actual observation, memory and imagination.

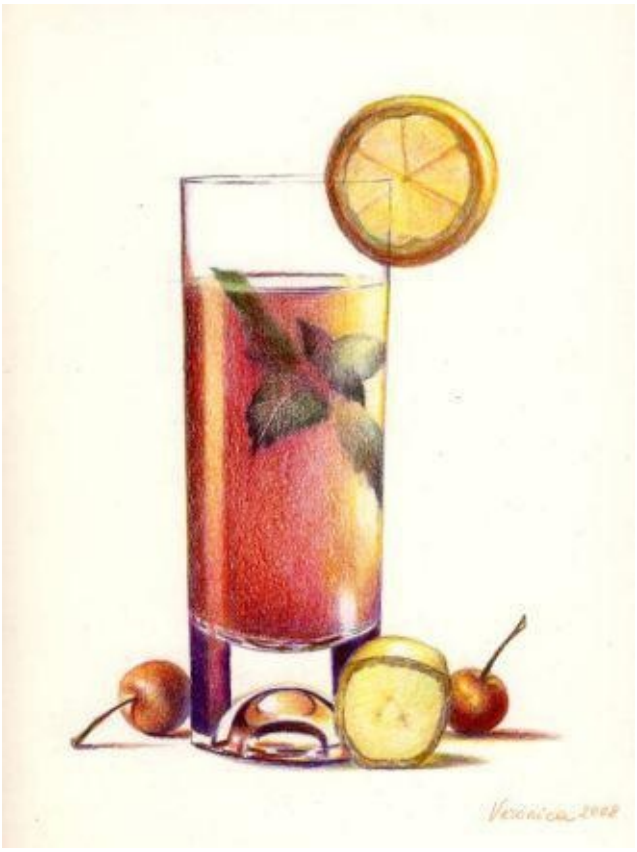


Step 1: Sketch a preliminary outline of the glass, following the same steps described before. Use a ruler to measure distances and draw straight lines. Outline the highlight slightly. Draw the fruit over the established glass outline.



Step 2: Block in the darks with sharp point of “black cherry.” Vary the pressure to darken some areas more than others, to achieve variety in values. Cast a shadow under the objects.

Step 3: Add “canary yellow” in a few white areas that need to remain light but not white. Work on middle tones with “poppy red.”



Glass with Banana and Cherries

9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) · 2008

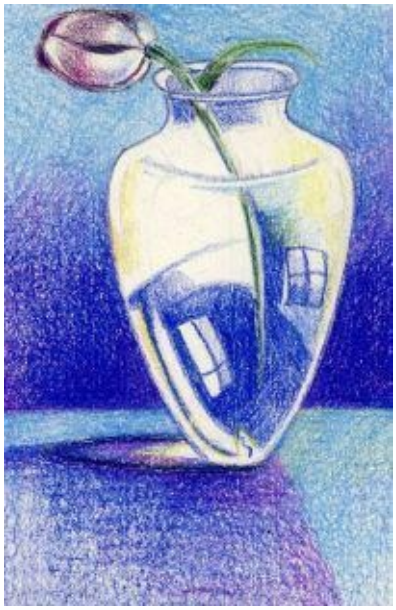
Step 4: layer in reds and greens in mid-tones in all objects. Green is a complement of red, so apply it not only as your local color in a leaf, but also to deepen the reds and yellows in the fruit. Outline a few edges for sharpness. I did not burnish the surface, as I prefer its slight textural finish.

Bonus Step-by-Step Demonstration: Blue Vase

Basic Colors: black grape, dark purple, indigo blue, dark green, ultramarine, violet, apple green, and white.

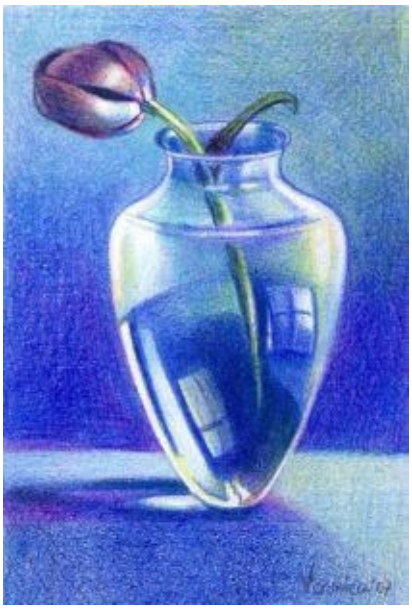
I composed this image from my imagination as well. I wanted to depict a calm, serene mood, communicating with the viewer through magic of the color. Hence, blue is the dominant hue in the picture with a single dark tulip stuck in a vase, representing personal solitude.

Step 1: Go through the same steps outlined earlier to draw out the vase. Do a freehand sketch first, choose your best side, duplicate it on the other side, transfer the vase and draw the rest of the composition around it.



Step 2: Block in the darks with mainly “ultramarine” and “violet.” Also add “aquamarine” in the background’s middle tones.

Step 3: Draw the tulip with “black grape” in its core shadow; then create a smooth gradation between the highlights and the shadow.



Blue Vase with a Tulip

4 x 6 inches · (10 x 15 cm) · 2007

Step 4: Work on mid-tones in the vase, drawing around the highlights. Blend the surface with a colorless blender.

Glossary

A

Aerial or atmospheric perspective refers to the effect of the atmosphere on the appearance of shapes at different distances in a landscape or cityscape.

B

Burnishing – a technique of layering color with heavy pressure. Tools like colorless blender, white pencil, turpenoid or mineral spirits are used to get rid of any textural areas appearing in the drawing. In other words, burnishing allows the artist to polish the surface to its maximum smoothness, producing deeper darks and rich mid-tones.

C

Colorfast or Lightfast paper or pencils – color resistant materials that resist to fading from light, heat, acids or other environmental agents. In other words, these are papers and pencils that don't "age" with time.

Chroma – is the purity of a color or the intensity of hue like pure red or pure blue.

Complementary colors or complements – are colors that are across from each other on the color wheel, like yellow-violet, green-red and blue-orange. Use complements to neutralize some colors that don't describe the center of interest. Beautiful drawings show balance between the intense and subdued hues.

Composition – the balanced arrangement of elements in a work of art.

Color or Chroma or Hue– any hue distinguished from white and black— red, green, violet, etc…

Value scale **–** a gradation of a color's tone, from its lightest light (highlight) to its darkest dark, in five or more consecutive steps.

Fleck – a small particle of color.

D

Deckle Edge – the feathery paper edge in handmade or mould-made paper. It is beautiful and creative to tear sheets into smaller pieces of paper to achieve this lovely deckle edge in lithographic prints and drawings. The deckle edge is not covered with a mat when framed.

Drafting Method –technical drawing; the method of creating precise representational architectural and engineering drawings of objects with accurate circles, curves and angles. Today, technical drawing is automated with CAD.

F

Focal Point or Center of Interest – the center of attention at which all compositional elements or aspects meet with maximum detail.

Foreshortening is the visual effect produced when an object or distance appears shorter than it actually is because of angularity towards the artist. Side walls of buildings, faces and the bodies of models or animals can all be foreshortened due to this optical illusion.

G

GSM or Grams per square meter – the gram weight per square meter of paper that does not vary with sheet size. It is helpful for the artist to determine paper's weight. *Strathmore Bristol vellum* paper, for example, is 100 lb (260g/m^2) while *Strathmore Drawing medium* paper is 80 lb (130g/m^2) – meaning the first is heavier (thicker) than the second.

H

Hue **–** another word for "color" (ex. red, green).

I

Intensity – is the saturation and purity of a color in relation to another color.

L

Local color – the natural color of an object as it appears in normal light. In drawing, local colors are applied over complementary colors to create a vibrant surface.

Line – is the visual path that moves the eye within the painting.

Linear perspective is a system of drawing sizes and distances into a unified order that expresses the depth of field—with foreground, middle ground and background.

M

Monochromatic image – consists of one color in a range of value gradations.

(Example: Deepest blue, blue, light blue…)

N

Neutralized color – means less intense color, either grayed or mixed with its complement.

Negative space – is the “empty” space around and between the objects (usually the background space). Negative space can form an artistically relevant shape and be an effective element in the composition.

O

Outlining – drawing a contour of the object with either a graphite pencil or a lighter shade of colored pencil. I used to Xerox the outline drawing and experiment with color combinations before starting to work on my actual drawing.

Overlapping – is covering with a design, in which one element or pencil stroke covers a part of another.

P

Paper’s tooth – the surface feel of paper. The more tooth a paper has, the rougher it feels to the touch. There are ultra-smooth, smooth, medium, rough and heavily rough surfaces available:

- *Hot pressed* paper has a smooth surface.
- *Vellum* paper has a very finely textured, smooth surface. (Vellum also means heavy weight, translucent drawing paper.)

Cold pressed paper has a slightly textured surface.

Plane – a flat or level surface. I use this term to describe the paper’s surface.

Watermark – is the brand name embossed in the corner of paper and visible when a sheet is held to the light (Examples; Arches cold press, Reeves BFK, etc.).

- *Rough* paper has a heavily textured surface.

Positive space – is the “filled” space in a picture, the primary subject of a painting occupied with objects, lines and shapes.

Proportion – comparative relationships between objects (i.e. size, volume, quantity, etc.), which, when rendered correctly, create a sense of harmony, symmetry and balance.

S

Shape – is the organic or geometric area contoured by edges within the painting.

Size – are the relative dimensions and proportions of objects or shapes to one another.

Space – is the area of the objects or shapes themselves (positive) or area in between objects (negative).

Shading – layering colors uniformly in broad strokes, creating a smooth, even finish.

Symmetry – the correspondence in size, form or arrangement of parts on opposite sides of a plane or line, characterized by proportional beauty.

T

Texture – is the roughness or smoothness of any surface, an illusion of feeling in our drawing.

Tonal Foundation – the basic value of a color applied across relatively wide area in the picture. (The background color can be middle gray with other value variations added later).

U

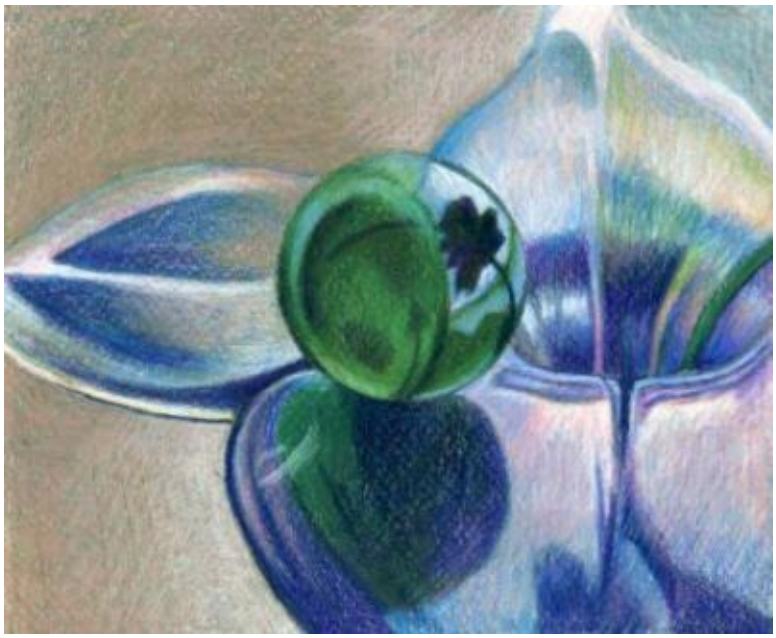
Underpainting – the first layer of a painted image, done in one color with tonal gradations of light and shade.

Unity – is a sense of harmony or completeness in painting.

V

Vanishing point is the apex of converging lines situated on the horizon line.

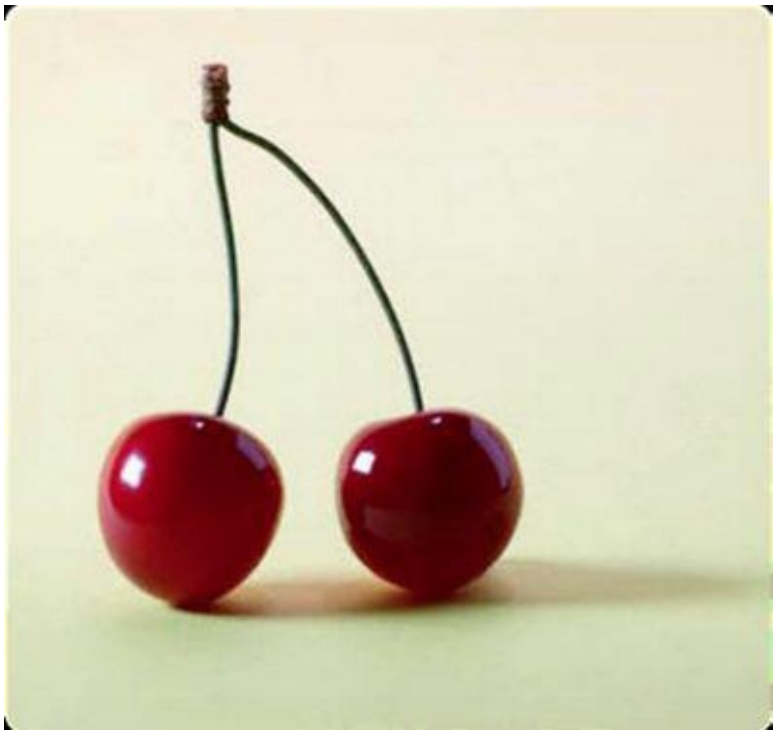
Value – the degree of lightness or darkness of a color, especially in relation to another contrasting color. It is the relation of light and shade in painting that creates tonal gradations (chiaroscuro). Value is different from color.



Blue Vase with Green Marble · 4 x 6" (10 x 15 cm) · 2009

Large Reference Photographs

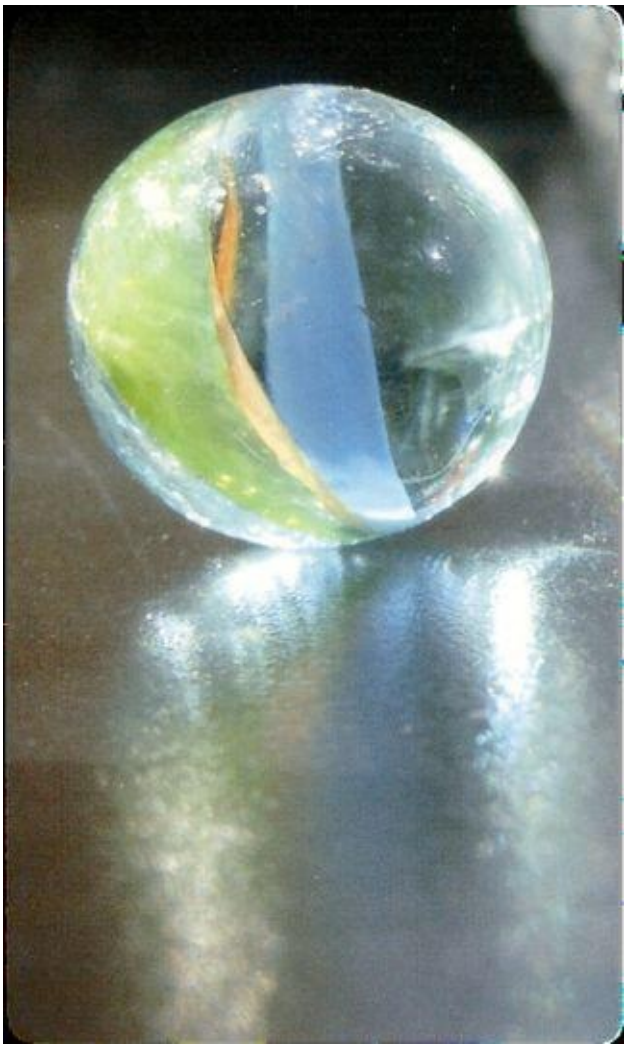
Chapter 3

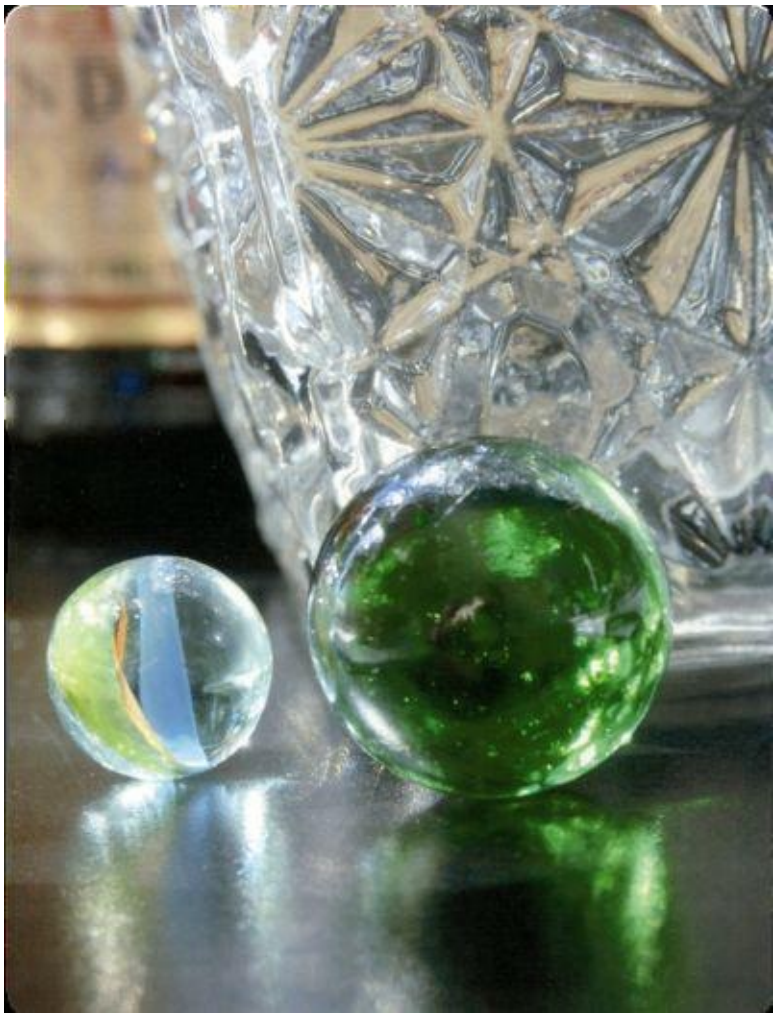


Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6





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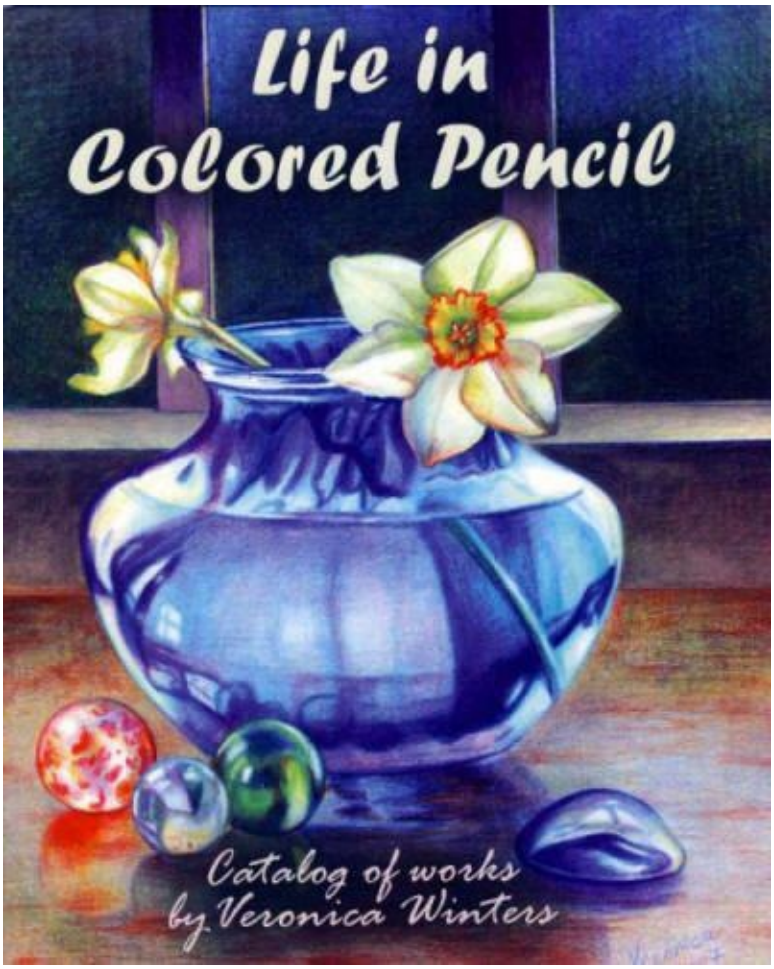

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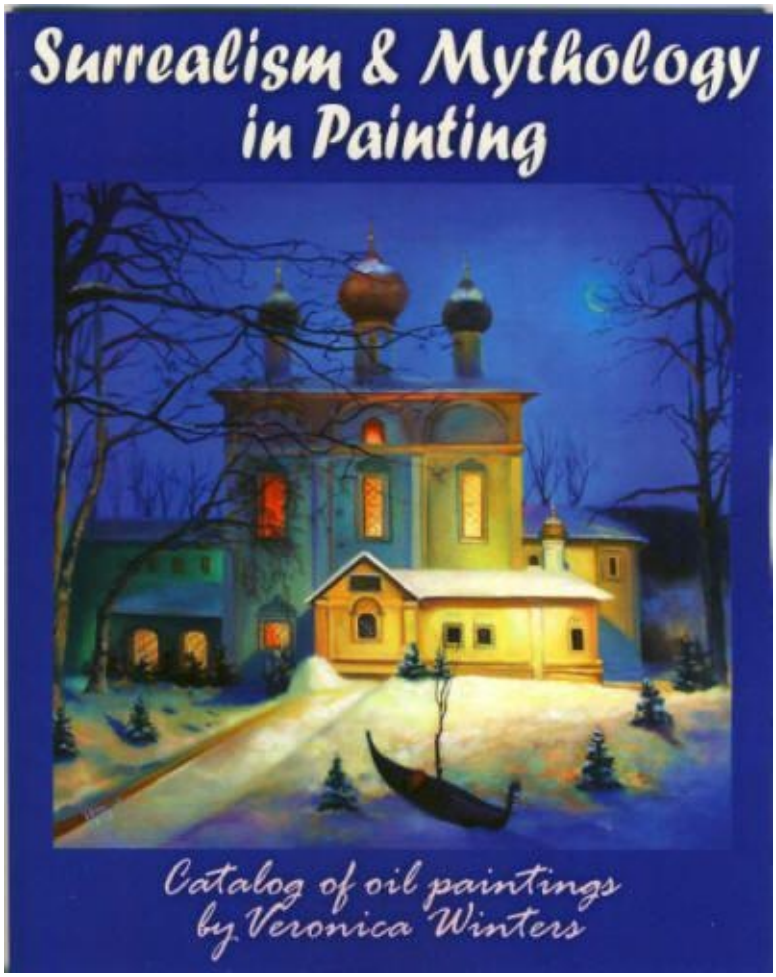

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